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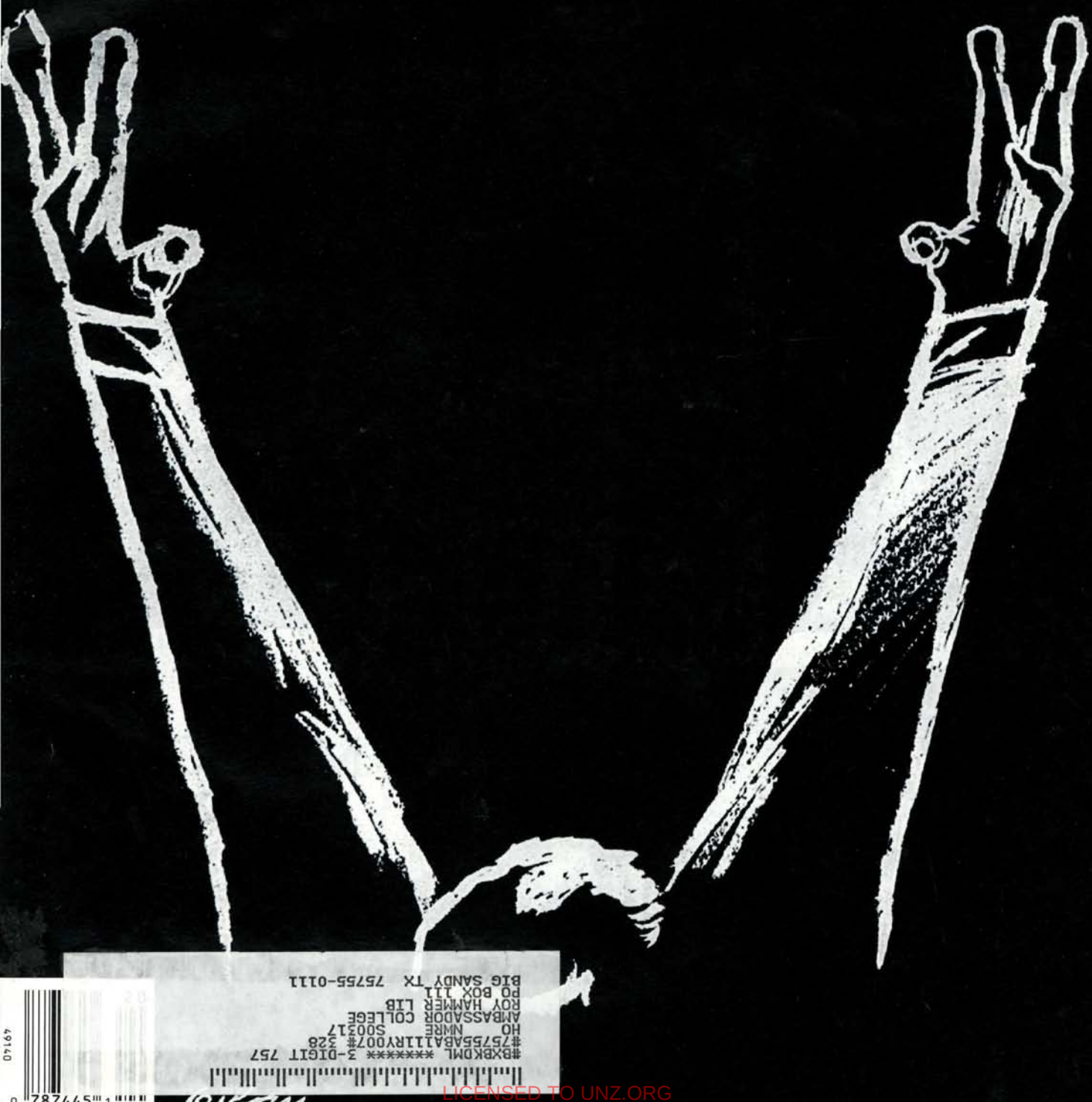

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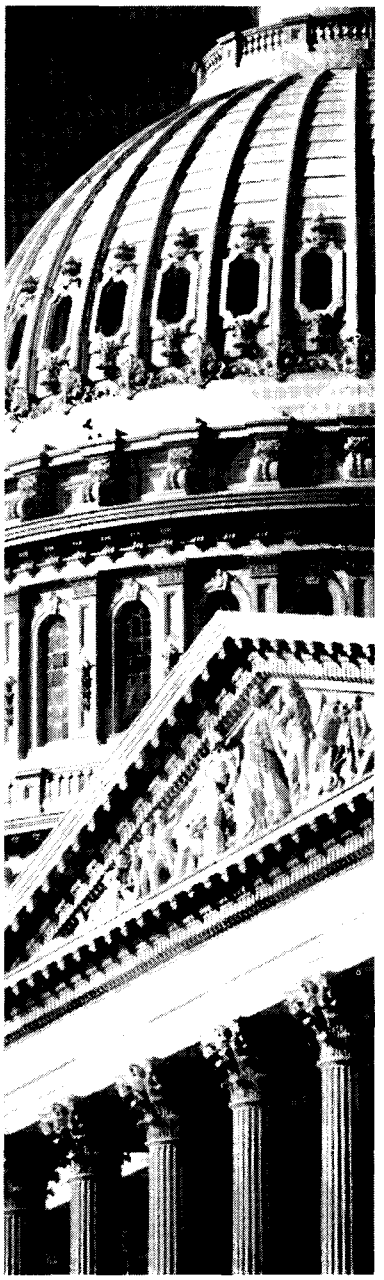

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

MAY 16, 1994

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ISSUE 4,139

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Cover sketch of Richard Milhous Nixon by Osborn, reprinted from the cover of THE NEW REPUBLIC, November 16, 1968. Articles on pages 8, 11, 24 and 28.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Pop

To the editors:

I would never expect THE NEW REPUBLIC to write a puff piece on me, but I never expected to be the victim of a snuff piece, either. Ruth Shalit's article, "The Business of Faith" (April 18), is filled with inaccuracies and easily verified errors.

(1) Shalit hasn't done her homework on the BrainReserve Trends, nor, apparently, has she taken the time to read my book, *The Popcorn Report.* To begin with, she confuses Icon Toppling with Fantasy Adventure, two very different Trends. She criticizes me for "repeating" and "repackaging trends." The point she misses is that our society is continually changing, therefore trends are continually evolving. Our business is to help companies see how the Trends re-emerge and reinvent themselves. For instance, Fitness reshaped itself into Staying Alive (longevity), and Matriarchal Swing into Female Think (political power through entrepreneurism).

(2) Although Shalit credits me for forecasting the advent of Cocooning in 1987, if she had done one of her favored Nexis searches, she would have found an interview with me in *The New York Times* on August 14, 1980, when I first predicted the return to home. Furthermore, I'm quoted using the word "cocooning" in a July 7, 1986, article in *The New Yorker.*

(3) BrainReserve is not an advertising agency and doesn't create advertising. Shalit's statement that I "masterminded" the Smirnoff "Home Is Where You Find It" campaign is simply not true. As for these ads being "ridiculed" by the advertising community, the fact is the campaign was named one of the ten best print campaigns of the year by *Time* magazine.

(4) Shalit quotes an anonymous individual who says our interviews are a sham. This is a serious accusation, yet she never asked me or anyone at BrainReserve to provide corroboration of our interview process.

(5) As for the repositioning of the Shower Massage, if Shalit had looked at page 119 of my book, she would have read that as a result of the commercial created by DDB Needham West, based on BrainReserve's stress relief positioning, "sales soared that Christmas." This statement was approved by Teledyne Water Pik prior to publication.

This "economics of meaning" stuff is just nonsense. Far from being an anodyne to corporate executives, often what we have to tell them is deeply unsettling, even frightening.

Of course, my assistant, Mary Kay Moment, never told Shalit that I was not familiar with THE NEW REPUBLIC. What she said was that I was not familiar with Ruth Shalit.

Finally, Shalit hurls an ugly word at me. That word is "scam." I have received thousands of letters from readers of *The Popcorn Report* all over the world, thanking me for the many insights that have helped both their work and their personal lives. Even Shalit is forced to concede that "Popcorn's clients defend her with a fervor that borders on the evangelical." To use the word "scam" denigrates not only me, but also all of the individuals and corporations who, with us, have worked hard to understand the future.

FAITH POPCORN
Chairman, BrainReserve
New York, New York

To the editors:

Your writer seems puzzled and distraught that most companies believe they get value from Faith Popcorn's work, albeit eliciting one negative view from the Richardson-Vicks Personal Care Division. As the former president of that division for more than ten years during the building of the Oil of Olay business, I must say that most of us thought Faith and her people brought candor and fresh, creative ideas to us. Perhaps the dissident viewer has an ox to gore.

Separately, as your writer noted, many senior executives of large, successful companies not prone to wasting money believe they get value from Faith's work. It's not just more dry, unused market research cluttering the files. It's an active stimulus to the creative process. If that process results in new ideas that positively affect their business, then it will have been a wise investment indeed.

J. D. AUTY
Greenwich, Connecticut

To the editors:

A MorningThought on PopcornWorks: SuckerBirths pass MinuteRate.

JEAN FITZGERALD
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Go East

To the editors:

I find it ironic that "Looking East," your editorial in favor of retaining MFN status for China, appears in the same issue

WHAT DO THESE ISSUES HAVE IN COMMON?

• HEALTH CARE REFORM
• ENTITLEMENTS GROWTH
• THE FEDERAL DEFICIT

THEY ALL SUFFER FROM

DEMOSCLEROSIS

THE SILENT KILLER OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

JONATHAN RAUCH

"America's political lexicon is enriched by the new noun 'demosclerosis.' It denotes the disease that saps the strength while swelling the size of modern government. Jonathan Rauch's detailed, lively and mordant essay points beyond diagnosis of that disease, toward therapy." — **George F. Will**

"An extraordinary feat." — **Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan**

TIMES BOOKS

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as an article about Harriet Beecher Stowe ("Sentimental Education" by Andrew Delbanco). The Civil War was caused as much as anything by the recognition by the wage-based industrial North that to continue doing business-as-usual with the slave labor South was economically harmful and morally reprehensible.

There can be no such thing as "free" trade when the nation you are trading with has a slave-based economy. With a host of fledgling democracies with which to trade, to suggest that we treat China with any kind of favor is the grossest form of self-serving evil.

KARL WENCLAS
Detroit, Michigan

To the editors:

If only I had read your April 18 editorial stating "the best hope for healing resides in the person of Morihiro Hosokawa" before I picked up today's newspaper. Perhaps you can create another contest: allow readers to predict which world or political figure praised by TNR will be the next to resign.

BRIAN MAAS
Sacramento, California

In front of the children

To the editors:

It's nice to see an article about welfare mothers, and single mothers in general, that acknowledges the fact that concern for their children rather than sheer laziness keeps many women at home with their children rather than at a paid job ("Day Careless" by Paul Offner, April 18). But the assumption that taking care of children is not real work—a ubiquitous assumption in almost any discussion of the plight of single mothers—still pervades Offner's essay. He speaks of the "specter of a 'day care economy' in which women stay in their homes, not interacting with the job market or picking up job skills." I suppose that interacting with prospective customers of one's day care business does not count as "interacting with the job market." If you are self-employed and have your own, say, plumbing and electrical contracting business, are you also avoiding interaction with the job market? And why is it that the myriad skills involved in taking care of infants and children are not real "job skills"?

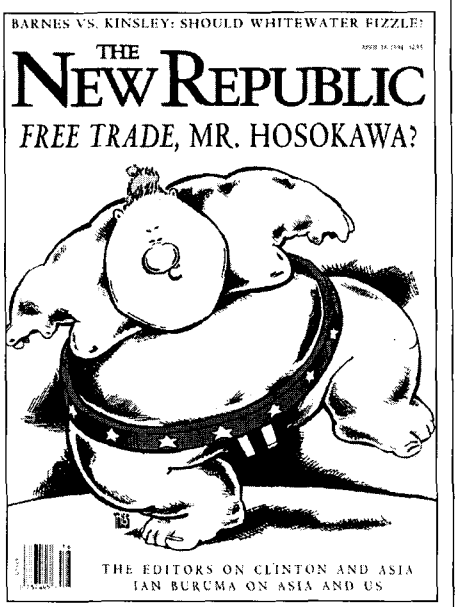
Maybe instead of castigating mothers for their so-called avoiding, fearful, cringing behavior of staying home to raise their children well, we should look at the rest of the population: the people who stay at their offices, not interacting with children or picking up child care and family care skills. Those are the people whose avoiding and fearful behavior is causing the epidemic of violence and despair among young people today.

SHANNON STONEY
Cookeville, Tennessee

Dialogue

To the editors:

Little wonder Cass R. Sunstein assails THE NEW REPUBLIC and other critics of Lani Guinier in his review of her book, *The Tyranny of the Majority* ("Voting Rites," April 25). While finding her most controversial views misguided, he concludes they are not dangerously radical.


BARNES VS. KINSLEY: SHOULD WHITEWATER FIZZLE?
THE
NEW REPUBLIC
FREE TRADE, MR. HOSOKAWA?
THE EDITORS ON CLINTON AND ASIA
IAN BURUMA ON ASIA AND US

Perhaps the explanation is that while purporting to omit only "technical footnotes" and "redundant" passages from the law review articles reprinted in her book, Guinier in fact expunges her most radical views, especially those giving rise to the label "quota queen."

Guinier, for instance, deletes her anti-discrimination enforcement touchstone: "a result-oriented inquiry, in which roughly equal outcomes ... are the goal." Moreover, she virtually erases her proposed remedy to deliver "proportional power": cumulative voting not just for elections, but for legislation, in which legislators can cumulate their votes so that a small minority can enact laws over the majority's opposition. Such a scheme would eviscerate existing limits on government power and unleash a tyranny of the minority.

Guinier has refused all invitations to face squarely her critics. So much for her professed desire for "dialogue": she's too busy rewriting history—and remaking Lani Guinier.

CLINT BOLICK
Litigation Director, Institute for Justice
Washington, D.C.

Generic

To the editors:

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LESLIE RITTER
Director of Marketing Communications
MUZAK®
Seattle, Washington

Poetry bites

To the editors:

I thought I would just let you know, since most of you old people are so derisive of the spiritual vacuum inside Generation X, that in your April 18 issue you actually published a poem that made me cry when I read it ("If You Could Write One Great Poem, What Would You Want It To Be About?" by Robert Pinsky). A poem so simple and true, so relevant to my mind and so far away from the really awful and delirious things you keep printing about bad dinner parties or political monuments, that I would just like to say thank you for a tiny work of art that actually worked, because it spoke not only to middle-aged publishers and oh-so-intellectual readers, but even to the lost and confused.

WHITNEY WILLIAMS
New York, New York

THE NEW REPUBLIC welcomes unsolicited manuscripts and article proposals. Because of the volume of submissions, we regret that we cannot acknowledge an article or return it unless it is accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If articles are accepted for publication, authors will be notified within two weeks. **No fax or phone queries, please.**

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FROM WASHINGTON

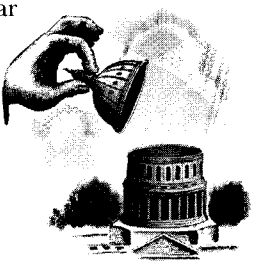
Any volunteers?

If anything is clear about President Clinton's Bosnia policy, it is that he will not insert U.S. ground troops into the war there. But many armchair strategists say that air strikes alone will inevitably fail, which (if true) would make them pointless if we're not prepared to go further. What's more, Clinton is still committed to using U.S. troops to help police any peace settlement, if it comes. And even air strikes put American pilots at risk.

Thus there's no avoiding the question of whether Bosnia is worth American blood. But there might be a better way of deciding—or rather, of deciding who decides.

The eternal moral dilemma that old people make the decisions about war but young people pay the price is heightened these days by two developments. One is the end of the cold war, which seems, at least, to make the use of military force more optional. America's vital national interests are not so clearly at stake. The second development is a president who famously avoided military service in his own youth. That makes it harder for him to decide to send today's youths into battle.

Both these developments need to be qualified. The cold war hawks who are now born-again doves didn't used to sneer, as they do now, about "merely" humanitarian motives for U.S. intervention. And their standards for perceiving an American national interest didn't used to be so high, either. They saw an interest worth 50,000 American lives in Vietnam, for example, yet can't find an interest worth a single one in Bosnia.



As for Clinton's personal baggage, it's useful to remember that something like nineteen out of twenty Americans of the Vietnam generation never served in Vietnam. And this at a time when military service was supposed to be universal, at least among males. The period after World War II was an exceptional time (the post-Civil War era was another) when most of the leadership class had been through war itself when young. Most times, including this one, are not like that. Furthermore, Clinton avoided service in a war he thought was wrong. Logically, if not emotionally, that should not deter him from using American force when he thinks it is right.

Nevertheless, deciding to risk other people's blood in war is surely the most difficult decision any president must make. Need it, though, be as difficult as it is now? Need it paralyze policy, as it seems to have done in the case of Bosnia? Must it leave America in a position where we cannot use our military might to do good in the world—or even to serve less-than-paramount national interests?

A letter to the editor published in these pages last July, by a TNR reader in New Jersey named Bruce Schwartz, had an interesting proposal for cutting through the moral agony of sending other people to fight and die in foreign wars. Schwartz says: Why not ask for volunteers? Why not a volunteer expeditionary force for Bosnia? He suggests it could be composed partly of volunteers from America's standing military forces and partly from recruits for this particular mission.

It may be a little late for Bosnia, and there may be practical complications, but the principle is a fine one. It is perfectly suited to the post-cold war world, where potential uses of American force are likely to be smallish and discretionary. Let no American be placed at risk against his or her will. But let America not be paralyzed by fear of American bloodshed.

To be sure, the United States military is already composed exclusively of volunteers. To me, the fact that each soldier made an individual choice to serve is a powerful argument for the moral superiority of the all-volunteer force, despite the insistence of many folks I respect that a draft is morally superior. But even in the all-volunteer force, each member didn't volunteer for any particular military action, and each may well have a different philosophy of intervention from the president (especially when the moment comes). The beauty

continued on page 49

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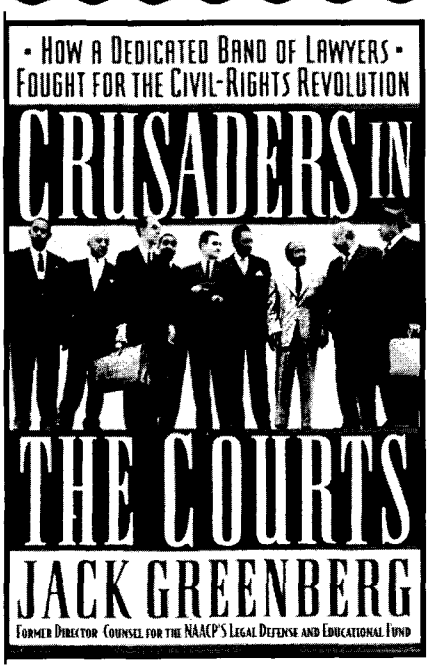
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 16, 1994

WHY NOT RWANDA?

If any recent intertribal horror qualifies as genocidal, it is the slaughter in the African nation of Rwanda. Hutu gangs, organized and armed by the country's Hutu-dominated army, are systematically hunting down minority Tutsis and butchering them by the thousands—in the most grisly manner imaginable. Even if reports of 100,000 killed in three weeks eventually prove an understandable exaggeration, as we suspect, the catastrophe still dwarfs the simultaneous drama in the Bosnian city of Gorazde, where 715 people were killed by Serbian shells.

So why the discrepancy in our response? No one wants air strikes to rescue the Tutsis from the Hutus. The main preoccupation of the Western powers in Rwanda so far has been to evacuate their own (mostly white) citizens. The fate of these "Westerners" was the big story in the American press. In fact, even as it was supporting new threats of air strikes against the Serbs, the United States voted for a successful United Nations Security Council resolution to *withdraw* most U.N. peacekeepers from Rwanda.

Once again, the Euro-American West faces the charge of racism—of considering white lives more precious than those of blacks, or at least of trading its indignation at the massacre of the former for world-weary realism about the massacre of the latter. Is it true, as U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali once observed (in Sarajevo of all places), that the great powers care more about Bosnia than Africa because Bosnia is "a rich man's war"?

Well, not entirely. The fact is that the U.N., led by Rwanda's former imperial power, Belgium, *has* tried to resolve the crisis in Rwanda already. That's why the U.N. troops were there in the first place. And it's also true that the convulsion in Rwanda, prompted by the shooting down of its president's airplane, happened so fast that effective action by outsiders would have been pointless by the time it could have been organized. (In Bosnia, the war has been slow and orchestrated and grimly predictable.) Finally, the U.S.-led intervention in Somalia, whatever else can be said about it, did show that this and other countries care about the fate of Africans.

The potential reverberations for the rest of humanity from ethnic cleansing in the heart of Europe are simply greater than those of ethnic cleansing in Rwanda. That doesn't make the cleansing any less repugnant; merely less urgent a cause for direct military action by the outside world. Rwanda's chaos may trigger a parallel disaster in its sister republic of Burundi, but nowhere else. In Bosnia, by contrast, the world faces a case of cross-border aggression, with the intention to wipe a recognized state off the map. Genocide there is made doubly dangerous because it is being carried out in the service of that broader aim. Serbian aggression violates norms of both internal and *external* behavior. In international law, most notably in the U.N. Charter, war to redraw recognized national boundaries is the "bright line" across which no actor in the international system is permitted to go. It is the essential transgression that the custodians of world order are allowed, indeed encouraged, to repel—militarily if necessary. If the Serbs succeed in violating that bright line in Bosnia, the results could range from a demoralized, destabilized Europe, to wider war involving Turkey, Greece, Russia and the United States.

Do the boundaries in African countries such as Rwanda make any less sense than the boundaries in Bosnia? In both cases there are grounds for discussion. But if the international community takes every military violation of international borders as an occasion to question the legitimacy of the boundaries themselves, then there is little hope for international order. If aggression against the imperially contrived state of Kuwait should be repelled, so should aggression against Bosnia.

There's no place for indifference about the suffering in Rwanda, much less for stinting on humanitarian relief—up to and including the introduction of foreign forces to provide logistical support. But Somalia underscores the practical and political risks of a more muscular approach to sorting out the underlying conflict, which is fundamentally internal. The tragedy of the American experience in the Horn of Africa is that our too-ambitious efforts arguably compounded Somalia's political problems even as we alleviated the starvation. For better or worse, Serbia's sending of troops and arms into Bosnia is simply of graver import than the conflict within Rwanda. In the Balkans, the costs of neutrality include not only countenancing genocide, but also, possibly, encouraging international chaos throughout large and strategically vital parts of the world. •

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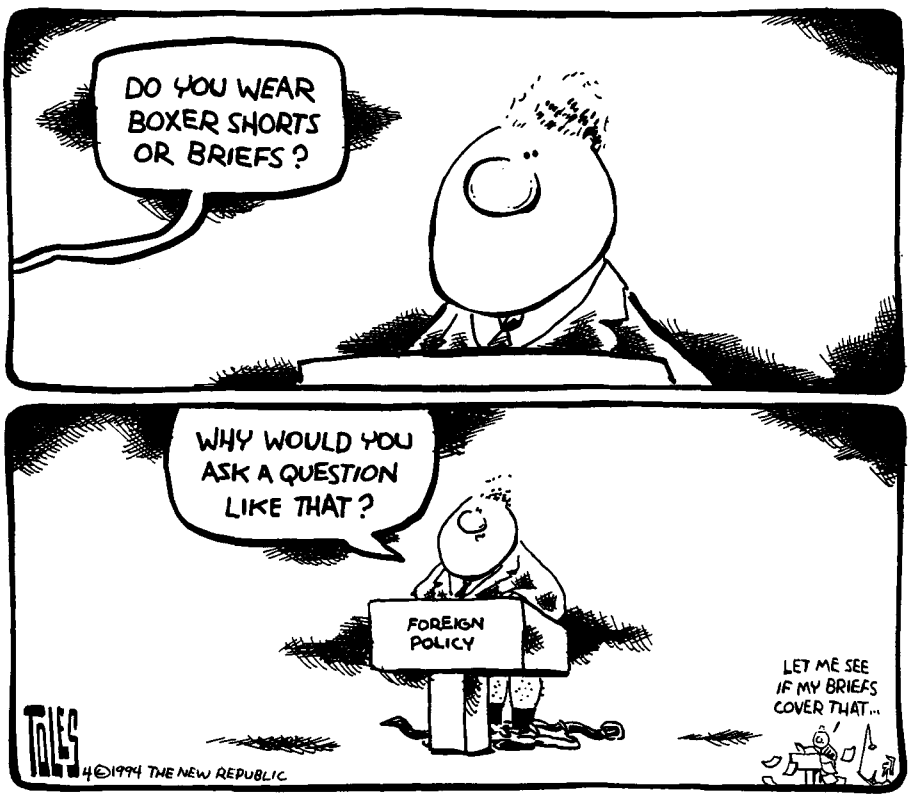
NOTEBOOK

IT'S NOT ME, IT'S THE WAITERS: Ted Stevens couldn't believe what he was hearing. When the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee voted earlier this week to crack down on the ubiquitous gifts, trips and meals that lobbyists shower on senators, the Alaska Republican went into a rage. The new rules would wreck his social life, he sputtered. No more freebie tickets means he can't take his wife to the opera anymore. And if lobbyists can't pick up the bill, just where is he supposed to get dinner? But Stevens said he wasn't just thinking of himself. He had a far graver concern. The ban on lobbyist-sponsored nights out would have a devastating ripple effect on the entire local economy. "Ninety percent of restaurants in Washington" would go out of business. The Kennedy Center would have to shutter its doors. "This is going to harm this town," he sighed.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P.R. FROM THE GRAVE:

April 20, 1994

MEMORANDUM TO FRIENDS OF THE NIXON LIBRARY AND OF THE CENTER FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

FROM: John H. Taylor

I thought you might be interested in seeing some examples of press coverage received by President Nixon during his recent visit to Moscow and Kiev, including a summary of items appearing in the Russian press.

These materials, besides highlighting the historic role RN continues to play on the international scene, remind us of the reservoirs of strength, fortitude, and will that he will be calling on in the days and weeks ahead as he faces his latest crisis.

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VINTAGE NIXON SUCK-UP WATCH: "'Recent speeches have shown [Nixon's] capacity to speak with courage and conviction on matters of extreme controversy. These qualities gleam with yet more distinction in the relaxed intimacies of private conversation when he lets his mind brood on the overcast world scene.... He has studied these world problems with an incisive and creative mind. What is more, he can state his views with eloquent conviction.'—Max Freedman, correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, April 17, 1958" —TNR, May 12, 1958, from an occasional feature titled "Unguarded Guardian," which monitored overly sentimental journalism with regard to Richard Milhous Nixon

HILLARY SUCK-UP WATCH: "After watching Mrs. Clinton deftly field questions about Whitewater and her actions as First Lady, her handlers were left wishing they had booked her for prime time.... The First Lady was a star witness in her own defense—composed, easy, never defensive. Her answers, carefully rehearsed to appear candid while disclosing little, combined her mastery of detail with amiable evasion. White House counsel Lloyd Cutler, the wise old hand brought in to educate the Clintons on the ways of Washington, had reason to smile."—*Newsweek*, May 2, 1994

MESSAGE: I KIND OF CARE:

Bush lends support to flogging sentence

—*Newark Star Ledger*, April 16, 1994

Bush Criticizes Caning but Likes Singapore

—*The New York Times*, same day

(Thanks to Gary Sesser, Upper Montclair, New Jersey.)

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At the Ivy League sperm bank.

UPWARD MOTILITY

By Stephen Rodrick

"WANTED: BRAINY SPERM. NERDS NEED NOT APPLY." So reads the ad in the Harvard University and MIT newspapers. It was placed by one of the nation's leading sperm banks, California Cryobank, which has just opened an office in Cambridge equidistant from the two campuses. Pursuing attractive donors is old hat for sperm banks, but no company promotes ejaculate elitism as much as Cryobank. Its founder, Dr. Charles Sims, says he makes a concerted effort to acquire superior specimens from the best and brightest so that he can offer each client "a donor she would be proud to take home to her mother."

Intrigued by the ad, I called the number listed. A cheerful woman answered and asked me a few questions: Was I at least five-foot-nine? Was I a college graduate or pursuing a degree? From what college? Ethnic background? Was I willing to donate three times a week at $35 a pop? If so, I was to come down to Cryobank's office and produce a sample, abstaining from sex for forty-eight hours before making my deposit. I made an appointment. The abstinence requirement was, tragically, no problem.

The Cryobank offices sit behind dark curtains on the ground floor of a not-very-phallic black building. When I arrived, a perky female technician handed me a three-page donor application. One question asked if there was a history of spina bifida in my family. Another wondered if I was of Jewish origin. ("Our Jewish clients want to know," lab technician Karen Fox later told me.) Next came a request for colleges and graduate schools I attended, and also my parents' occupations. Page 3 looked like the midterm for Genealogy 101: "In the interests of both our donors and our customers, please provide documentation on ethnic background tracing back to your great-grandparents. 1 for Caucasian, 2 for black, 3 for Asian and 4 for other. It is permissible to divide into thirds. Please do not guess."

And that was just the short form. There was also a twenty-five-page donor profile, a novella-length questionnaire that asked for even more information about my academic achievements: high school and college GPAs, SAT verbal and math scores, GRE and MCAT scores if applicable. There were essay questions: "Do you like pets? If so, which is your favorite? What is your favorite type of music? What is your ultimate ambition or goal in life?" Additional facts were requested about my relatives. Was my uncle balding? How about my aunt's bone structure: small, medium, large or very large? A mini-psychological profile asked me to rank family members, on a scale of 1 to 4, as "Optimistic/Pessimistic," "Assertive/Passive," "Leader/Follower," etc.

Finally, it was time to get busy. "Please choose either of the rooms," the assistant said. "If you would like to watch a video, it's on Channel 3. Here's your cup. Please write your name on the side with a marker." I entered a small cubicle resembling an examination room, only bleaker, with an uncomfortable chair to deter dawdling. When I turned on the small color T.V., a very naked "Charlene" said, "I guess since I was about 5 I knew I'd be an exhibitionist." There was also *Playboy*'s "Girls of Hooters" edition, a copy of *Penthouse* and the Victoria's Secret catalog. ("We provide material as long as we don't think it is degrading to women," says Ronda Wilkins, a Cryobank spokeswoman.)

Cryobank officials maintain that they don't recruit from Harvard and MIT exclusively. In a city of a dozen colleges, however, they don't advertise anywhere else. The company's promotional material brags that "students are recruited primarily from the following universities: USC, UCLA, Stanford, Cal-Berkeley, Harvard and MIT." Cryobank is also the only sperm provider that boasts of a "donor matching service." Clients first receive a catalog with basic information about available donors. For an additional $35 you get a half-hour consult with client rep Latrice Allen from Cryobank's L.A. headquarters. "I have Polaroids of all our donors," Allen says. "Clients call and ask me to rate [the donors].... Some have specific movie stars in mind." The basis for her ratings? "You know," she giggles, "whether they're good-looking."

To ensure that there are no ethnic surprises, Cryobank color-codes the specimens in its storage tanks. "White for Caucasian, black for African American, yellow for Asian and red for American Indian and others," Fox says. "This way there can be no doubt." At these prices, there shouldn't be: specimens of an unspecified gender cost $165 each, gender-specific specimens go for $375. Be warned, though: you have to order early. Found a collie-loving, Harvard-educated, Evan Dando look-alike with a Zen outlook on life? Cryobank urges you to act fast. As one of its newsletters notes, "Many patients have been disappointed to learn that a donor is no longer available when, two weeks earlier, he had twenty or more vials in our inventory."

Cryobank and other "genius banks" are often accused of marketing master-race sperm, but Sims sniffs at the suggestion. "This is client-driven," he says. "Nobody wants a donor who has been in prison.... While a college degree doesn't guarantee the child will be a good person, it does suggest a basic level of organization and a degree of integrity."

Alas, while my sperm was described as "normal," I was not accepted as a donor. Shortly after my rejection, I

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ran into a Harvard man who *was* accepted. I asked him if he was bothered by Cryobank's snobbish approach.

"No way," he told me. "It's a business deal. If you pay top dollar, you should get top sperm. I'm pretty honored. Besides, I'm getting paid for something I do anyway."

STEPHEN RODRICK, a former TNR reporter-researcher, writes for *Boston* magazine.

Is Israel a Jewish settlement?

THE EAST BANK

By Douglas J. Feith

April 13 has come and gone, and the Israeli military withdrawal from Jericho and the Gaza Strip that was supposed to end by that date has not yet even started. The Israel-PLO accord signed September 13, 1993, seemed to confirm that the conflict between the Arabs and Jews of Palestine could be resolved through diplomacy. The old Israel-has-no-right-to-exist line, which scoffed at peace, appeared to have yielded to pragmatism and moderation. Doves, optimists and champions of peace-through-talk felt vindicated. They had contended for years that the Arab-Israeli conflict had been transformed. The essential issues now were no longer of the to-be-or-not-to-be variety, but simpler, more easily compromised questions of where to locate the borders and how to share water and ensure mutual security.

But the seven months since the White House signing ceremony have not sustained that hope. They have seen an increase in bloodshed and more promises broken than new accords sealed. Why? Perhaps it is because the brutal, old, rejectionist, anti-Zionist ideology has a firmer hold on the Palestinian Arab community—or at least the politically relevant (i.e., armed) elements of that community—than enthusiasts of September 13 appreciated.

Insight into this unhappy reality emerges from the current campaign of condemnation against Israeli settlements in the territories. In the Hebron atrocity's aftermath, the PLO, although it had agreed to defer the settlements issue several years hence to the final status negotiations, brought the settlements front and center in the implementation talks. They denounced them as "illegal" intrusions on "Arab land," an impediment to peace and the source of Arab-Jewish hostility and violence. The campaign sends contradictory messages, respectively, to two important audiences.

In the West, Arab denunciations of the settlements are commonly taken to signify that the conflict is no longer about Israel's existence but only its control of the "occupied territories," relinquishment of which would displace only 120,000 or so Jewish settlers. In the Arab world, however, the attack on the legitimacy of the settlements appeals so powerfully *not* because its focus is narrow, but, on the contrary, because its implications are so broad and profound. To delegitimate the settlements is to attack Zionism—the framework that produced the State of Israel—at its foundation.

This is so because the legal basis for Jewish settlement in the territories is the same as the basis on which the State of Israel was declared in 1948. Asserting that the settlements are illegal is effectively, even if unwittingly, to undermine the legitimacy of Israel. That the Jewish people lack the right to settle and govern in Palestine, all of which is "Arab land," has been the position explicitly advocated by Arab opponents of Zionism since World War I. Israel's enemies, however, now confront an Israel stronger than ever militarily and impossible to defeat in a single blow. Moreover, smart rejectionists long ago grasped the need to speak to the world at large in the vocabulary of liberal democracy even (especially) when one's aims are belligerent and illiberal. Hence, it is better to uphold the traditional rejectionist position by focusing attacks on the settlements than by employing fond, old slogans like "Drive the Jews into the Sea," which are more straightforward but generally unappealing abroad.

The foundation of Israel's legality as a state under international law is the Palestine Mandate, confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922, and the "historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine," which the Mandate highlighted as it recognized the "grounds for [the Jewish people's] reconstituting their national home in that country." That is the foundation cited in Israel's May 14, 1948, declaration of independence and the basis on which the international community granted recognition to the Jewish state.

The Jewish people's rights as recognized in the Mandate, including in particular the right of "close settlement by Jews on the land," are likewise the legal justification for the Judea-Samaria settlements. Nothing since the end of the Mandate regime in 1948 has yet terminated those rights. Jordan's purported annexation of the West Bank in 1950, recognized virtually nowhere, was the fruit of aggressive war and did not terminate Jewish rights in the territory. U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 leaves all claims to the territories open for resolution through negotiations among the parties. The 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, commonly said to prohibit Israeli settlements, does no such thing. Even on the questionable assumption of its legal applicability to the territories, the convention limits only those rights and duties Israel acquired as a result of the 1967 war, not the pre-existing, Mandate-recognized rights of the Jews to settle their ancient homeland. Until a state actually exercises recognized sovereignty there, under a

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peace treaty or otherwise, the rights of Mandate beneficiaries in the territories are preserved.

The legality of the settlements is a separate matter entirely from whether Israel should trade them away in negotiations. The settlements are not inherently an important issue. They are not the cause of the conflict, which raged before the settlements existed, before Israel acquired the territories in 1967, indeed before Israel came into being as a state. The *settlements* are an issue because the *territories* are important to Israel and the settlements strengthen Israel's attachment to those territories. The settlements do not preclude Israeli withdrawals. Their existence, however, raises the political costs in Israel of withdrawal.

The argument that settlements are an impediment to peace makes sense only if one presupposes that Israel should quit the territory and that it would have peace if it did so. The counterargument—that the best hope of averting war lies not in attempts to appease unappeasable opponents but in preservation of Israeli military strength, which necessitates Israel's retention of all or most of the strategically valuable territories—has nearly a century of unhappy history to bolster it.

Yasir Arafat's condemnations of Israeli settlements should not be assumed to signify that PLO ambitions are now moderate and limited to the territories. They are entirely consistent with the traditional Arab view that all of Israel is an illegal Jewish settlement on Arab land. If that remains the conviction of Arafat and his constituency, Israel's exchanging territory for a peace treaty will not solve (and could even worsen) the problem.

DOUGLAS J. FEITH served as deputy assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration.

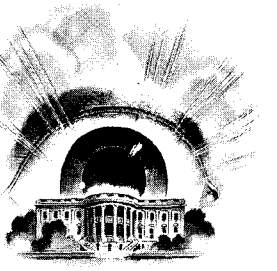
WHITE HOUSE WATCH

CLINTON'S THE ONE!

By Fred Barnes

Hours before President Clinton addressed the White House Correspondents Dinner on April 23, he gathered his senior aides in the Oval Office to talk about his prepared remarks. The group also screened the visuals Clinton would show at the dinner: slides of mock magazine covers that never ran (like a *Motor Trend* with Clinton in a Mustang and headlined "Recall?"). The president's advisers, knowing Washington reporters are thin-skinned, fretted over a press backlash. But since Clinton would be self-deprecating ("I had a very different plan for my entrance tonight, but we couldn't find the right canoe"), they figured he'd get by. He wouldn't come off like Richard Nixon, the media's bitter enemy.

Not a chance. Clinton couldn't help himself. He said sarcastically that the infamous *Time* Whitewater cover (which used a photo taken months before the scandal broke) "will go down in history for journalistic integrity." He added that *The Wall Street Journal*'s criticism of his wife for making money trading commodities was "like *Field & Stream* criticizing somebody for catching fish." That wasn't enough, so he ad-libbed another. "I am now convinced there is no deliberate conspiracy among the press corps," he said. "You just can't help yourselves. Hunting in packs is a matter of pure instinct to you."



There's a simple explanation for Clinton's Nixon reprise: he's the most Nixonian president since the man himself. R. W. Apple Jr., writing in *The New York Times*, insisted they "hardly seemed made for each other." Actually Nixon and Clinton, who talked frequently during the year before Nixon's death on April 22, were a perfect fit. Both "came from dirt," says Nixon adviser Roger Stone. Both were closer to their mothers than to their fathers. Both operated from few core principles, but were obsessed with winning. Both lost races for governor—Nixon in 1962, Clinton in 1980—then fought back from defeat. Both did so by reinventing themselves, Nixon as the "new Nixon," Clinton as a "new Democrat." Both survived scandals in their first major national campaign by turning in boffo T.V. performances: Nixon with the Checkers speech in 1952, Clinton with "60 Minutes" in 1992.

But there's a more important similarity: an attitude of mistrust toward all Washington beyond the White House staff. This includes the press. One of the amazing aspects of Clinton's presidency is that he started with a press corps favorably disposed toward him, yet has gotten more negative coverage than George Bush, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter or Nixon received in their first years. Since Clinton scarcely blames himself for this, that leaves only one other option—malevolent journalists. Obviously, there's a dash of paranoia in his attitude. But he's also persecuted. The press is out to get him. It's this mixture of paranoia and persecution that's pure Nixon.

Clinton's most Nixonian episode isn't Whitewater, but Travelgate. It had all the elements: us-vs.-them, suspicion of permanent Washington, press-loathing. The permanent governing class was embodied by the nonpartisan staffers in the White House travel office. Clinton tried to replace them with loyalists. Nothing wrong with that, except Clinton wanted to pull it off without admitting his real motive. Thus, to justify their firing, the White House charged the old staffers with wrongdoing. Soon the FBI was summoned, without the knowledge of Attorney General Janet Reno, and was pres-

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sured into agreeing to a press release alleging serious crimes might be involved. Inevitably the press stepped in to cover the "scandal." Clinton resented it deeply, and still does.

Whitewater touches on a different Nixon-like quality of Clinton's: the denial of any legitimate motives to critics. Nixon often accused Watergate detractors of having *only* ulterior motives. Clinton and his allies say the same about Republicans who raise Whitewater. At her press conference on April 22, for instance, Hillary Rodham Clinton said, "Some of the opponents of health care have certainly tried to use Whitewater as a proxy for their opposition to health care." More Nixonian yet, Democratic National Committee Chairman David Wilhelm last March charged that Republicans "can't stand [Hillary's] success and that's why they're on the attack." And, he went on, how dare anyone as corrupt as Al D'Amato and Phil Gramm and Bob Dole question the president's ethics? This line of attack was imposed by the White House.

Oh, yes, there's another similarity. Clinton under duress is all the more eager to mingle with folks outside the Beltway, just as Nixon was. The town meeting, with a carefully selected audience, is the chosen venue. True, Nixon was more calculating. In his 1968 campaign his sessions with average citizens were entirely staged. Now, Clinton encounters occasional flak at his town meetings. The boss of the Godfather's Pizza chain, Herman Cain, became a folk hero in the business community when he challenged Clinton's health care plan at an Omaha town meeting on April 7. But most trips are pure relief. When Clinton visited New Hampshire last March, advance men spotted anti-abortion placards critical of him. To blot them from the president's view, they grabbed signs from kids and held them in front of the hostile placards. That's hyper-Nixonian.

For Clinton, the worst part of being Nixonian is the public's reaction. He gets far higher marks for his presidential performance than for his trustworthiness. Democratic pollster Peter Hart says Clinton's performance rating jumped ten points in the months after he won ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement last November. But the public's trust of him sank ten points in the same period. I don't think any other president but Nixon could have managed that. Maybe their nicknames have something to do with it: Tricky Dick, Slick Willie.

O.K., let's be clear on one thing. Clinton isn't Nixon. He's a yuppie version of Nixon. His us-vs.-them attitude is like Nixon's in kind but not degree. Whitewater won't rival Watergate. And so on. But Nixon also had another side, the global strategist. The day after Nixon died, former aide David Gergen said this of him: "When he talked about building a lasting structure of peace, he was serious about it. It was not just a rhetorical phrase for him." Gergen, now White House counselor, is the only person to work for both Nixon and Clinton. Will he ever be able to say anything so lofty about Clinton? •

COURT WATCH

OVERSEXED

By Jeffrey Rosen

Last week's *J.E.B.* decision should have been the dramatic highlight of an otherwise dull Supreme Court term, especially for those who have been waiting for Ruth Bader Ginsburg to find her voice. The outcome of the case, which forbids prosecutors from peremptorily excluding jurors on the basis of sex, was never really in doubt. But this was a rare opportunity for Ginsburg to clarify the uncertain constitutional status of sex discrimination, and to explore the connection between jury service and the struggle for women's suffrage, which she had hinted at in her confirmation hearings.

Instead, the decision is disappointing on several levels. The wooden majority opinion by Harry Blackmun insists implausibly that there are no relevant differences in the perspectives of male and female jurors. A tortured concurrence by Sandra Day O'Connor subverts Blackmun's argument by insisting that "gender matters" in certain trials. As for Ginsburg, she felt that it would be unseemly to speak for the Court on a subject she had championed as an advocate, and chose, therefore, to say nothing at all.

Blackmun's opinion contains sweeping generalizations but little empirical support. "The majority of studies suggest that gender plays no identifiable role in jurors' attitudes," he declares, citing only one study. In fact, the relationship between gender and jury deliberations is considerably more complicated than he claims. A 1987 survey of the empirical literature by Nancy Marder in the *Yale Law Journal*, for example, points to persistent gender differences: women talk less than men during jury deliberations; female jurors are more likely than male jurors to convict rape defendants and to vote for longer sentences. (A generation ago, conventional wisdom held the opposite.) Several studies have concluded that women are more likely than men to oppose the death penalty. And both women and men tend to be more sympathetic to defendants and lawyers of their own sex. This means that in a paternity suit, like the one in the *J.E.B.* case, it was hardly irrational for the state of Alabama, representing an unmarried mother, to try to strike all the men in the jury pool.

Jury consultants, who have made a cottage industry of analyzing the relevance of sex and race, confirm that gender does make a difference in certain cases, although it is less decisive than occupation and class.

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Marjorie Fargo of Jury Services, for example, says that gender has the most dramatic effect in cases involving domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and obscenity, where seven out of ten women are likely to be unfavorable to the defense. She also points anecdotally to the trial of Erik Menendez, in which the six women and six men divided angrily along sex lines, and the women accused the men of shouting "sexist comments." Jury selection manuals, for their part, are full of confident generalizations about gender. "Stereotypically, it has been thought that women jurors are more receptive to emotional arguments regarding pain and suffering," confesses the latest edition of *Jury Selection: Strategy and Science*. "In the same vein, it is stereotypically thought that men are more tolerant of violence and are more receptive to self-defense theories in criminal cases. Homosexual males are thought to be an exception to this general stereotype."

After insisting that gender has no influence on verdicts, Blackmun nervously hedges his bets. Even if gender *does* make a difference, he writes, sex-based peremptory strikes would still be unconstitutional because they promote the same "archaic stereotypes" that were used to keep women off the jury lists. But this claim, too, is a little hasty. Women were excluded from jury pools until the 1960s because of paternalistic notions about protecting "the weaker sex." Today, by contrast, women—and men—are peremptorily challenged because of strategic generalizations about their biases.

Blackmun's final equivocation is his facile equation of race discrimination and sex discrimination. "With respect to jury service, African Americans and women share a history of total exclusion," he declares. He then endorses Ginsburg's recent suggestion that the constitutional status of sex discrimination "remains an open question." But Blackmun fails to explain *why* distinctions between men and women should be scrutinized as carefully as distinctions between blacks and whites. Ginsburg, for her part, has never spelled out her own argument for treating sex discrimination like race discrimination. At her confirmation hearings, she suggested that the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment, which guarantees "all persons" the equal protection of the laws, were not concerned about discrimination against women. But she added promisingly that the Nineteenth Amendment, which said in 1920 that the right to vote can't be abridged "on account of sex," might be interpreted to contain a broader principle that women and men deserve equal status as citizens.

A convincing *J.E.B.* opinion might have resolved the constitutional status of sex discrimination by developing the Nineteenth Amendment argument along the following lines. Sex, like race, *does* sometimes matter in jury deliberations, which is precisely why sexual and racial jurymandering should be prohibited. As scholars Akhil Amar, Barbara Babcock and Jennifer Brown have each written, early feminists recognized the connection between suffrage and jury service; many of them assumed that ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment would extend to women all the rights, privileges and immunities of citizenship, including grand jury service. Gender-based peremptory challenges, the argument goes, violate the Nineteenth Amendment by depriving the excluded jurors of a privilege of political citizenship (the right to vote on juries) simply because of their sex.

The best constitutional argument, however, is also the simplest. As Thurgood Marshall recognized in the 1986 *Batson* case, there is an incurable tension between the principle of equal protection, which says you have to give reasons for treating people differently, and the peremptory challenge, which says you don't. Marshall, therefore, called on the Court to strike down *all* peremptory challenges. The only argument for preserving peremptories is their pedigree. "The Court imperils a practice that has been considered an essential part of fair jury trials since the dawn of the common law," glowers Antonin Scalia in his *J.E.B.* dissent. But as Albert Alschuler of the University of Chicago points out, Scalia basically made up his history: although on the books from the thirteenth through the nineteenth centuries, peremptory challenges were almost never used. They were originally designed to save time, not to encourage racial and sexual stereotypes, because, until very recently, jury pools were entirely homogeneous.

Instead of eliminating peremptory challenges, Blackmun loudly protests that he means to preserve them. But there is not much left in the wake of his opinion. All strikes based on constitutionally protected categories—race, sex, ethnicity, religion, national origin and illegitimacy—are now off-limits. That leaves categories such as occupation, body language, posture and hairstyle. For example, Blackmun said that excluding people who have had military experience would be fine even though men would suffer disproportionately. But, according to Blackmun's logic, it's not clear why the excluded soldiers couldn't object on the grounds that stereotypes about the military lack a "rational basis."

Peremptory challenges are especially ill-suited for a political culture that demands multicultural jury pools but has a horror of stereotyping of any kind. Instead of Blackmun's timid compromise, it would have been better to follow Marshall's lead, eliminating peremptory challenges with a clean stroke. The use of pretrial jury questionnaires could then be expanded, so that both sides could challenge prospective jurors on the basis of informed judgments rather than lazy hunches. With the abandonment of the ideal of the anonymous jury, and increased pressure on jurors to talk to the press, the biases and demons of individual jurors are likely to be ventilated at some point. Wouldn't it be better to have full disclosure before the trial, rather than after? •

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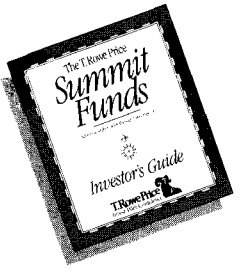

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GORAZDE POSTCARD

WAITING FOR NATO

By Elizabeth Rubin

One Saturday a few weeks ago I shared a pot of Turkish coffee with a couple of Serbians in the desolate lounge of Doboj's Hotel Bosnia. The Doboj pocket in the Bosna River valley rests in the middle of the Serbian-controlled Krajina, a long crescent of territory around northern Bosnia cut off from Croatia by the Sava River and from Serbia by the Drina River. Once a crossroads for the Yugo railway lines, Doboj is now caught in a web of Serbian, Muslim and Croat trenches. Sporadic shelling echoed through the streets and in the hills as Major Milovan Milutinovic, the Bosnian Serb military press attaché, and Georgi, a Serbian businessman who requested I not use his last name, chatted about local politics.

"For two years all we wanted was peace. But listen for yourself," said Georgi, as the plastic windows rattled from another explosion. "Doboj is being squeezed like this glass." He tightened his hand around a shot of slivovitz until his knuckles drained of color. "If the Muslims and Croats want war, we have an answer for them, and if NATO and America want war we have a bigger answer for them." He raised his arm toward the ceiling, and gave the finger to an imaginary fleet of planes.

According to Milutinovic, ever since the Clinton administration arranged an alliance between the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats, the Muslims have been gaining ground with a new offensive from the south. The tape of President Clinton at the pact's signing in March plays again and again on Serbian television, proof to the Bosnian Serbs that U.S. neutrality in the Balkan conflict is a myth.

The Serbian propaganda machine fuels the country's war effort. And the United States is fast becoming its biggest target. News of Western "lies" appears on nearly every nightly broadcast. An image on Serbian T.V. of *Washington Post* headlines proclaiming Serb aggression and atrocities is followed by footage of a newly unearthed mass grave—naked, rotten corpses, many of them castrated. "Muslims and Americans falsely accuse Serbs again," drones the narrator. "This is the work of bestial Muslim attacks on our Serbian people."

My conversation with Georgi and Milutinovic took place on April 9, a day before NATO's "pinprick" air strikes around Gorazde. The threat of Western engagement was provoking intense defiance throughout the self-proclaimed Serbian Republic, where the most frequently invoked pop culture hero is, ironically, none other than the American vigilante commando, Rambo. As the war's parameters expanded from a local battle to a showdown with the Western world, the rhetoric of Serbian historical destiny intensified. And the overflights of NATO F-16s only upped the ante for Serbian martial ambitions. "We never wanted this war, but we had to defend Serbian land," said Georgi, echoing the view shared by nearly all Serbs, from imperiled trench-diggers at the front to President Radovan Karadzic.

This rhetoric was neatly folded into the Serbs' new Yalta theory, which holds that America, Europe and Russia planned the carve-up of Yugoslavia long before the outbreak of war—Catholic Croatia and half of Bosnia would go to Germany and Western Europe; Serbia and the other half of Bosnia would belong to the East. And the Bosnian Muslims will be puppets for U.S. and Arab interests. According to the Serbs, Americans are so dependent on Middle Eastern oil money that they are blindly fostering the birth of a new Islamic terrorist state on European soil.

The road to Doboj is a trail of Serbian conquests marked by charred, rubble-strewn villages, where spray-painted X's—which mark a house for "cleansing"—scar the remaining walls of exploded Muslim and Croat homes. More recently, however, the ethnic terrorists have adopted a preservationist methodology, destroying people while saving their homes for new Serbian occupants. On the surface, Prijedor and the suburbs of Banja Luka, recent hot-spots of ethnic cleansing in the Krajina, have all the features of quiet towns: neat gardens, streets lined with blossoming magnolias and plum trees, children jumping rope. But the children are now Serbian, and behind the flowers, most of the homes display in their windows shiny orthodox crosses, Serbian flags and new Serbian occupancy papers.

When I asked my Doboj hosts how such sights fit with their claim that they are fighting a defensive war, they responded that the charge of "ethnic cleansing" was part of a Western misinformation campaign and that the Croats and Muslims were fleeing their homes because, after all, they were the losers. Besides, Georgi claimed, citing Serbian newspaper reports, the Croats and Muslims were hoarding anti-Serbian arsenals in their basements long before the current war began.

If I really wanted to see what was going on, the two men said, I ought to visit the soldiers who have been holding Doboj's front lines for the last two years. I took them up on the offer. As we left for Ozren mountain, a couple of miles from the city center, a grenade, apparently launched by Muslims, exploded around the corner from the hotel, killing a Serbian civilian and wounding four others. "We have been very patient," Georgi said, his voice rising with his fist. "But enough is enough."

At the local army headquarters, a small brick house on the hill, we picked up the commander, a former professor from Banja Luka who led us on a tour of the Serbian redoubts. In the trenches, Aleksandr, a travel agent

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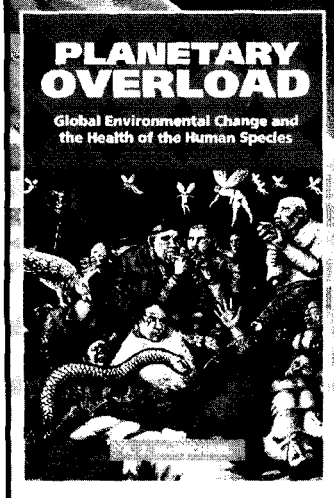

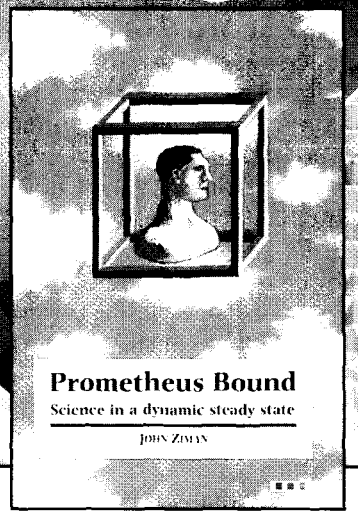

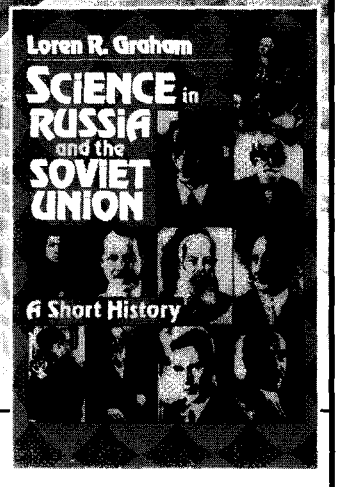

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turned soldier, greeted me with the words: "You are the first foreign journalist to visit us and yet everyone writes that we are cannibals and rapists. Never do they talk about Muslim atrocities." One of his comrades had a simple theory about why the Serbs are portrayed as murderers in the media. CNN, he said, is a propaganda organ jointly owned by the United States and Saudi Arabia. "Thirty million people are unemployed in America," added Georgi. "Somebody must pay for them. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Libya have so much money and they want a Muslim state in Europe. The United States is the sponsor, but we are paying the price."

The toll did not prevent them from serving a hefty lunch, a proud rebuke to the purported choke-hold of Western sanctions. "The tighter the sanctions, the bigger our plates," said the commander, passing around deep fried steaks, crepes and the inevitable, brain-searing slivovitz. As he rattled off some Serbian poetry and predicted the great songs of victory that would be penned twenty-five years from now, another officer presented me with a gift—the Serbian flag. The commander then launched into a history lesson: "The Krajina has been Serbian country for more than 500 years. The Muslims here are Serbs converted by the Turks. The Croats here are Serbs and Muslims converted by the Catholic Church under the Austro-Hungarian empire. And during World War II the Bosnian Serb population was slaughtered while the Muslim and Croat population flourished." Anything else I might have heard is just lies, "Western lies."

The next day, I headed south, through the razed villages of the lush Drina River valley, on a bus loaded with soldiers returning to duty. We arrived in the Bosnian Serb capital of Pale, fifteen miles outside Sarajevo, just moments after the news of the Gorazde air strikes. In the dining room of the Hotel Olympik the "March on the River Drina," a century-old Serbian martial hymn, blared from the radio. Serbian television declared the United Nations and America official enemies of the Serbian people.

"We say to the big cowboy Bill Clinton that the Serbs have never lost a war," taunted the anchorman. "But how many have the Americans lost? Vietnam, Somalia and now Bosnia." The hotel owners nodded in agreement, then glanced at their American guests and shook their heads. As the anti-Yankee mood gathered momentum, one American said, "You'd think this was the moment they've been fighting for all along." NATO's attack, a Serbian intelligence officer told me, confirmed that the Serbs were a people of historical destiny—"like the Jews." They had suffered genocide over and over, but the West would soon learn a new meaning for the words "never again." The Serbs, he said, "are a great people with a big heart, a big soul, and they're great soldiers. The third best army in Europe. But in war we are crazy." He laughed. "Poor Muslims, poor NATO."

With the roads to Sarajevo sealed, and little hope of getting to Belgrade without a visa, I remained in Pale long enough to become a target for anti-American sentiment. "Aren't you ashamed of what your country has done?" a woman at the press center asked.

As the world realized that the air strikes had failed to bring the Serbs to the peace table, the citizens of Pale cheered at repeated T.V. broadcasts of a morale-boosting tour of the Gorazde front by General Mladic and President Karadzic. One of the more bizarre moments of this photo-op found the two men down in a bunker, sipping from a single glass of slivovitz and playing a game of chess as Serbian folk music played softly in the background. "Your move, Clinton," Mladic said to Karadzic in a tense moment. By plan, or by the sort of baffling coincidence that has given this war so many of its symbols, the game ended in a stalemate. As the players strolled off, Karadzic offered the general a tiny purple flower, which he twirled in his fingers for the remainder of the tour.

The U.N. provided me with a lift from Pale to Sarajevo. A few hours after my departure the Serbs decided to expel all American journalists. With their territory cleansed of enemy press, they stepped up their attacks on Gorazde, and soon shot down a British Harrier that was attempting to take out a Serbian tank. Westerners expressed shock and amazement at the belligerence and deception of the Serbians, but in Sarajevo, the line I heard time and time again was, "What the hell did you expect?"

Despite the deep frustration with Western indecisiveness, the F-16s that fly over Sarajevo all day still provide a thread of optimism to the city's residents—or at least a touch of gallows humor. "Ah, yes," a teenager shouted to me over the roar of bombless jets, "I love the sound of NATO in the morning."

ELIZABETH RUBIN is an editor at *The Forward.*

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In the middle of July 1979, while the Sandinistas were chasing Gen. Anastasio Somoza out of Nicaragua, the wife of the new governor of Arkansas had her own little problem. A short time before, she had contracted to sell 2,600,000 pounds of cattle, worth about $2 million. That's a lot of cows. Picture a convoy of sixty-five mooing tractor-trailer trucks headed for the slaughterhouse, and you'll get the idea. In the time-honored tradition of commodities trading, Hillary Rodham Clinton did not actually own the cows she had agreed to sell, so, to complete her trade, she had to buy some on

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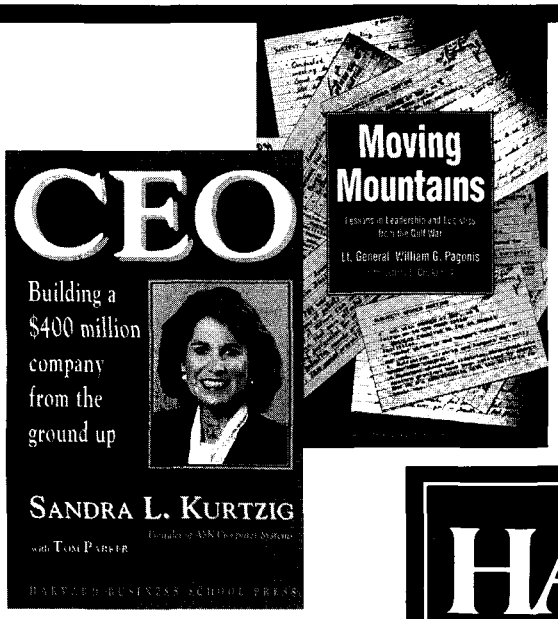

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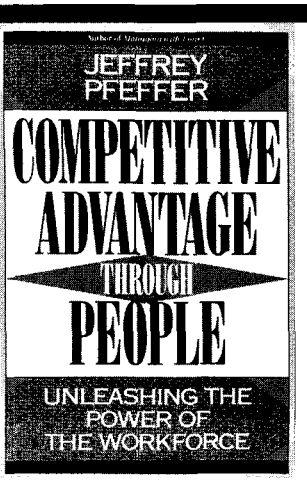

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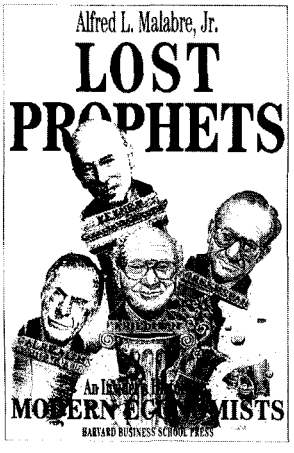

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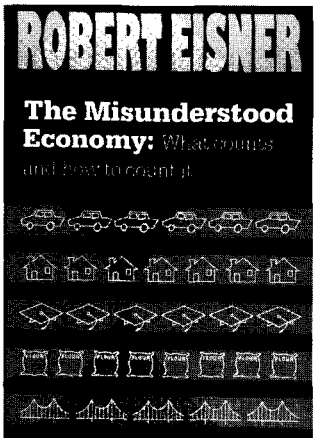

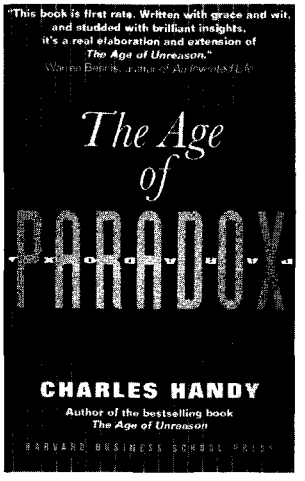
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the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. This process is called short selling, and you make money at it if prices go down: sell high, buy low. Hillary Clinton's problem was that the price of cattle wasn't going down. Since the Fourth of July, it had been going up, fast.

Under one of her contracts, for example, she had agreed to sell 420,000 pounds of feeder cattle (calves) for 76.30 cents per pound. The sale had to be completed by the end of August, and here it was July 12, and the price of feeders was 81.57 cents per pound. To meet her obligation, then, Rodham Clinton faced a loss of 5.27 cents per pound times 420,000 pounds, or about $22,000.

Her position in live cattle (older cows, set to be turned into hamburger) was even worse. Her contracts were for 2 million pounds and the market price on July 12 indicated she had already lost $41,000. Another feeder contract showed a slight gain, but, overall, she was $60,000 in the hole with her cattle, and she had less than $40,000 in her account, so her equity was negative $20,000. And for every cent the price of cows rose, she was out another $26,000.

If Hillary Rodham Clinton had been a normal commodities speculator and if the office where she traded, the Ray E. Friedman & Co. (REFCO) branch in Springdale, Arkansas, had been a normal securities office, she would have received a phone call on the afternoon of July 12 going roughly like this: "Uh, Mrs. Clinton, how are you? How's everything at the governor's mansion? Great! Well, unfortunately, your cattle aren't doing very well. Those feeders were up a cent and a half today. The truth is, your equity is gone, and you'll have to post margin. We need a check for $117,500 by tomorrow, or we'll close out your positions."

A margin call is similar to an eviction notice: pay up or get thrown out on the sidewalk. It's standard procedure for brokerage firms to ask clients to post margin when the market moves against them. At the time, the margin for cattle was $1,500 per contract, and since Rodham Clinton had sixty-five contracts, she needed $97,500 in her account; as it was, on July 12 she had a *negative* $20,000, so she needed $97,500 plus $20,000.

When you own stocks or bonds, you can't lose more than you put up, but in commodities trading losing more than your initial capital is not uncommon. So brokers insist that their clients maintain sufficient margin as insurance if the market takes a bad turn. The Springdale office of REFCO frequently ignored margin requirements, but many of its clients were well-heeled folks—doctors, dentists, lawyers and bankers. If the worst happened, REFCO could sue.

It's extremely doubtful that Rodham Clinton, a new associate at the Rose Law Firm—or her husband, who had been making $26,500 per year as attorney general—had $117,500, or anything close to it. Around this same time, the Clintons were making their Whitewater Development Corporation investment, and an official of Citizens Bank and Trust of Flippin, Arkansas, later told *The New York Times* the couple had few financial assets. They didn't even have the cash to come up with the $20,000 for their part of the down payment on Whitewater, but maybe that's a different story.

Anyway, Rodham Clinton never did get her margin call, and, suddenly, the next day, cattle prices began to fall. Within a week, she had turned her $41,000 loss in live cattle into a $41,000 profit. She closed her account at REFCO and walked away with a total gain in just nine months of $100,000.

Now, fifteen years later, pretty in pink, Hillary Rodham Clinton was telling reporters at the White House, "I was lucky." She was certainly luckier than Stanley Greenwood, a well-off businessman who, on July 12, was in almost precisely the same situation as Rodham Clinton. According to a lawsuit he filed, he had short positions in fifty-three cattle contracts, valued at about $1.6 million. Greenwood claimed that twenty-eight of those contracts were simply placed in his account by REFCO without his authorization, and, when he complained, REFCO officials said not to worry—they would "carry him" as prices rose. But in the post-July 4 carnage, REFCO *didn't* carry him, and on July 12, after a margin call, the Springdale office sold out his positions, a loss to Greenwood of more than $100,000—"even though I still had $25,000 in my account, and I was earning a six-figure income." Rodham Clinton had minus $20,000 in her account and was earning a lot less. Greenwood had a rhetorical question for me: "How come she got to stay in, and I had to get out?"

Commodities trading is a very difficult game, one in which amateurs rarely win; studies show that 75 percent to 90 percent of small traders end up losing money. Rodham Clinton, on the other hand, racked up a phenomenal record—she made thirty-one trades, and twenty-six were winners. She opened her account a month before her husband's election with a check for $1,000 and made $5,300 in one day (exactly how is lost to history since she can't find the records), then went on to score a 10,000 percent profit. While Hillary won, James Blair, the man she said was her mentor in commodities, lost. On October 15, 1979, he filed a suit in Chancery Court in Springdale, claiming he was out "in excess of $15,000,000."

At the April 22 press conference Mrs. Clinton was asked, in gingerly White House press corps fashion, if "maybe your broker might have, because of your position or your husband's, might have given you some kind of ... you know, favorable advantage." Her reply was hardly a ringing denial. "There's really no evidence of that," she said. No evidence? Well, yes, but how credulous are we supposed to be? The whole adventure brings to mind a fellow walking away from an open-air drug market with his pockets bulging with cash. A cop asks him where he got the money and he says, "I won it in a poker game."

Actually, the REFCO office in Springdale—a small town about 150 miles from Little Rock that was best known for being the headquarters of Tyson Foods—did resemble a poker parlor, a particularly seamy one where there was reason to suspect that a lot of cheating was going

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on. It was hardly the place to "try to create some financial security for our family"—which is what Rodham Clinton told the press on April 22 that she was doing with her commodities trading.

Hillary's broker, Robert "Red" Bone, who also managed the office, had, in fact, once been a professional poker player. In 1977 Bone, a former Tyson Foods executive, was barred by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) from trading for a year after charges that he manipulated the egg market(!). A later complaint by the CFTC said that, despite the prohibition, Bone continued to trade in 1977 and 1978, using a front man and running up profits of $1.5 million. In 1981 he had his license revoked for one year, was barred from trading for three years and was fined $100,000. Separately, Bone was disciplined by the Chicago Merc in December 1979 for "serious and repeated violations of record-keeping functions, order-entry procedures, margin requirements and hedge procedures." When the poker party ended in a rout in October 1979, as both clients and brokers were caught in a devastating cattle market downdraft, Bone and REFCO became the targets of more than a dozen suits, and Bone himself filed bankruptcy.

Another office character was Stephen Johns, who became a broker at 21 and within two years had acquired a Ferrari, a Mercedes-Benz, a dozen Corvettes, a boat and more than $100,000 worth of jewelry. When I tracked him down in northwest Arkansas, Johns told me he later served time in prison, but he wouldn't elaborate. The man who ran REFCO, Thomas Dittmer, had his own problems with the regulators. In December 1979 the Chicago Merc suspended him from trading for six months and fined REFCO $250,000.

In 1978 and early 1979 the REFCO office in Springdale was riding a bull market in cattle, with prices soaring from fifty-five cents in October to more than eighty cents by April—the biggest short-term increase in history. The price increase was a delayed reaction to rising feed prices in 1973 and 1974. Farmers couldn't afford to keep their cattle, and they began selling them off in 1975 and 1976. As the supply of cattle declined, demand stayed roughly the same, so prices rose (they were rising as well in 1979 as part of general inflation, which topped 11 percent). At her press conference, by way of explaining her amazing success, Rodham Clinton said that Blair, her friend and lawyer for Tyson Foods, "had this theory that because of the economy in the early part of the 1970s, a lot of cattle herds were being liquidated, so that there was going to be a big opportunity to make money in the late '70s." But Blair's was hardly a blinding insight. Practically everyone who followed commodities understood the cattle cycle and realized that prices would rise.

To know a bull market is coming is not enough. You have to know precisely when, how much and what durations. Because it involves heavy leverage, commodities trading is a game of quick ins and outs. If you are long—that is, if you're a *buyer* of cattle—then if the price rises 5 percent, you double your money, but if it falls 5 percent, you get wiped out. Even during the big run-up to eighty cents, there were dips in which investors who were long lost large sums.

In fact, in the fall of 1978 about half of Rodham Clinton's cattle trades were on the short side—that is, she was hoping prices would *fall*. With one major exception—a disastrous fourteen-day trade in November that cost her $17,400—she was right. She also toyed successfully with soybeans. Then in April, the bull market in cattle abruptly ended, and prices crashed to their fall levels. She made five consecutive winning trades on the short side in cattle and hogs (which were behaving like cows) in April and May—a glorious coup. That set her up for her final score—the $41,000 profit in live cattle after escaping the margin-man's ax in mid-July.

After *The New York Times* broke the story on March 18 about Rodham Clinton's success in cattle, I called my commodity trader friends to find out how she did it. They all suspected the same thing—"allocated trades." Under this maneuver, then improper and now illegal, brokers would execute large short-term block trades in the name of the office, rather than in the names of specific clients. Shortly afterward, when they had learned if the trades were successful, the brokers would allocate the winners to favored customers; the losers could be absorbed by the office as a promotion cost or pawned off on past winners. Testimony in several lawsuits makes it clear that this sort of allocation went on in the Springdale office, but Hillary Clinton was an unlikely beneficiary since her records show very few quick trades—with the notable exception of a deal in live cattle in January that made $25,000. More typically, she would hold her positions for two weeks, even a month.

No, something else seems to have been going on. First, of course, she was helped by the lack of margin calls. The one she should have had in July would have turned what became a $25,000 profit in feeders and live cattle into a $41,000 loss. But, more important, look at her behavior. Faced with disaster, she did not—like General Somoza—run to Miami. Bravery? Well, courage is one thing, but a young couple with almost no assets risking losses of $39,000 per day is another. It is plain foolishness. Unless, unless....

"Why was she willing to assume that kind of risk?" one of the nation's top commodities traders asked me, fully knowing the answer. "How did she have the financial wherewithal to be so confident?" The markets were not being manipulated. She could not have known for certain that cattle would turn around on July 13, stop rising, start falling. But what she could have known is that, in the worst case, someone would have stepped up and assumed her losses. That, at any rate, is the way she acted. The only other plausible explanation is the one offered by Hillary Clinton, a novice speculator in the toughest investment racket in the world: "I was lucky."

JAMES K. GLASSMAN, former publisher and then money culture writer for TNR, writes a financial column for *The Washington Post*.

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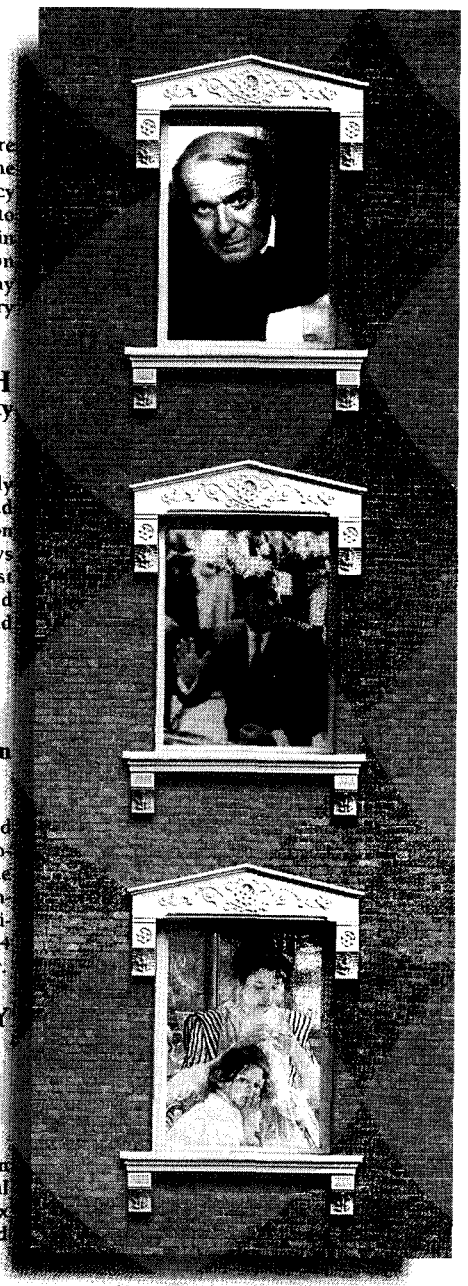

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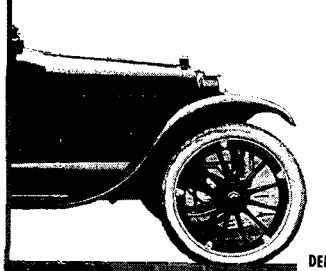

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Nixon-hating: an anthology

Nixon is a kept man. He is also a phony. He preaches one set of values, he practices another. He takes the handout, and uses the cloak of righteousness and anti-communism to cover it up. To know this and yet to place him within hand's reach of the White House is a risk, for as the Fulbright Subcommittee notes, when the gap opens up between belief and reality, "the individual becomes insane, and the state disintegrates."
—The Editors, September 29, 1952

Reading through Nixon's speeches, it becomes clear that for him neither ideas nor words have a claim to autonomous dignity and significance: they are weapons with which to bloody opponents; tags and slogans to be *utilized* in political publicity. It is hard and perhaps impossible to say to what extent this is the result of planned demagogy and to what extent he is himself caught up in the fetishistic coils of the ad-man's rhetoric....

Nixon stands between these two figures, a well-oiled drawbridge between McCarthyite barbarism and Eisenhower respectability. In his own way, he does understand the need for ideas, only he thinks of ideas as slogans for a thorough sales campaign. He shares the McCarthyite's impulse toward repression, only he is shrewd enough to see that at the present moment no American politics can succeed unless it is respectable in manner and language. In a curious way he, too, is caught up in the current turn toward "moderation."

Nixon gains the support of, and in his political appeal embodies, what might be called repressed McCarthyism, the McCarthyism of members of the newly prosperous middle class which would like to strike out with Joe's wildness at all the threats to its security but suddenly remembers that having risen in the world it must now mind its manners. And here, I think, we get to the essential reason why so many eggheads, may the tribe increase, find Nixon so disturbing. It is not merely because he often seems to have been put together at a sales conference, but also and far more important, because he often seems to represent a potential of American life far more threatening than McCarthy himself—a potential of a fairly prosperous, politically besieged, emotionally tight-lipped, rigidly conformist, suburban America in which all values are transvalued into salability, all techniques have become devices for persuasion, and persuasion itself is indistinguishable from a hidden bludgeon. McCarthyism may represent a picture of a possible future. But Nixonism is, at the moment, the only plausible way of getting there.
—Irving Howe, May 7, 1956

Why waste space on Nixon, a California correspondent asks: "Dick is a dead duck, Viva New York." Now if Dick were a duck, that would be true: a winged duck is a doomed duck. But Dick is not a feathered thing, he is a chameleon. And chameleons are endowed, Webster says, with the "power of living for long periods." They also "can shoot out their tongue for a distance nearly equally their length." Mr. Stassen may wish to step on him; Mr. Rockefeller may think he *has* stepped on him; and California Democrats may hope they have buried him. But lo, he lives—"remarkable," as Webster adds, "for the changes of color of the skin which are governed by nerve stimuli dependent upon the mood of the animal, as well as on surrounding conditions."
—The Editors, November 24, 1958

One of the best-authenticated accounts of Nixon's ability to turn his feelings on and off comes from his undergraduate days at Whittier College when he was taking an eager part in amateur dramatics. In one production, playing a bereaved old innkeeper, Richard had the stage entirely to himself at a climactic moment, and during rehearsal he was having trouble projecting the old man's tragic grief. It was the drama coach, Dr. Albert Upton, who saved the scene.

"Dick," he said, "concentrate real hard on getting a big lump in your throat, and I think you can cry real tears."

Dick practiced until he had the trick pat, and at the final performance tears flowed like magic. What recalled the incident for Dr. Upton was the sight of a news picture, in 1952, of Nixon crying on Senator Knowland's shoulder in the denouement of the expense fund crisis. "But mind you," Upton added hastily, "Dick is never spurious. He really felt it."

In campaigns Nixon has prided himself on his skill with audiences. Once, in California, however, under severe provocation, his control splintered. When a particularly noisy, obnoxious heckler threatened to break up a meeting, Nixon finally turned on him, and casting aside his practiced urbanity, gave the man a savage tongue-lashing. In a fiery flash of candor Nixon shouted so all could hear: "When we're elected, we'll take care of people like you! Okay, boys, throw him out!"
—William Costello, September 28, 1959

There may be more joy in heaven, but we're bored by the newest Nixon. He reeks of respectability; he's Dwight Eisenhower without the charm, and he's ruining the sports pages by turning up whenever more than two athletes gather. Is he running for the presidency or the Olympic team?... He's everywhere but in the pool rooms.

On June 1 he and Pat will have been married for twenty years. That should interest the *Ladies Home Journal*. It could publish another article: from Happy Warrior to Happy Husband. Richard even looks different. Where are the jowls? Why have the clothes become more funereal? He moves from ball games to hospital dedications....

The old Nixon in the back alley was bad enough, but this all-American Boy who wants to be the all-American Father leading an all-American Team is nauseating.
—The Editors, February 15, 1960

He has shown again a taste for the transparent device, the meretricious argument, the theatrical overstatement, an aptitude for pat slogans, easy solutions, sly aspersions. His instinct all along has been to lash out against all who differ with him; and he has restrained himself, articulately, because a reversion to earlier tactics would, he knows, revive the malodorous image of the politician who climbed to power over the bodies of contemporaries in both parties.... On the eve of the election, in the hot crucible of decision, Nixon's stature has been shrinking. He stands revealed as a man without a spiritual home, ready to twist any circumstance to his advantage, devoid of a genuine moral commitment to either liberalism or conservatism but trying to feel at home wherever the tides of circumstance happen to lodge him.
—William Costello, November 7, 1960

In these pages, I need not explain why the prospect of electing Mr. Nixon depresses me. Suffice it to say that he

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appeals to *the wrong majority* to govern the United States in these times—a majority whose dominant temper will be sullenly resentful of the social changes we have been experiencing and impulsively reactionary toward the crises we shall inevitably be enduring.
—Irving Kristol, June 8, 1968

Studying Nixon in action becomes a preoccupation, an exercise in behavioral analysis. Must he always, upon emerging from his plane onto the ramp at the door, no matter how large or small the waiting crowd, fling his arms upward and outward, his fingers wiggling in a frantic digital dance? He always does. During his speeches, at points of maximum emphasis, must he always bend his arms at the elbows, his legs at the knees, and, rising on his toes in a curious slouching crouch, thrust his clenched fists at the audience? He always does. And it always works. His crowds in the past fortnight have never failed to respond with cheers and chants of "We want Nixon" and rhythmic clapping, when he calls by word and gesture for their response. Nixon connoisseurs like to stand where they can view him in profile, his back noticeably rounded and bowed at the neck, his whole stance expressive of an overwhelming ordinariness, and most detached observers must acknowledge, expressive also of the quality of endurance, the talent for survival that in eight years has raised him, essentially a stateless and homeless politician and a seemingly chronic loser, from defeat to his present eminence.
—John Osborne, October 5, 1968

It is a sour election. For the first time (and for both candidates) I saw police with carbines on rooftops and outside airports (Kent County, Michigan).

Nixon comes to the front, waggles his fingers in the V-for-victory sign, and soon is declaring that the Supreme Court is freeing "confessed murderers and rapists." . . .

In normal times the reporters in a candidate's entourage would have drummed out a jolly theme song by this time: But who has the heart to do it with Nixon? They feel they are being used; they are programmed in the humorless. Young executive-type press secretaries get out a sharp, terse, mimeographed Nixon attack before each appearance, ready for the waiting wires and the next headline. It is the slickest, most efficient, opulent and effective operation in campaign history. Reporters shrug; what can they do?
—TRB from Washington, October 19, 1968

Here, it seems to me, we have a president who has trained himself not to give a damn about "what the people believe" about him as a person. Giving a damn about it would be too painful, too much of a drain upon inner resources. For such a man, there is a cathartic relief in feeling free to say as he said to *Time*'s editors, at a risk surely understood, that "black people are different from white people" and (to Dan Rather) that women will have to "develop respect for themselves as executives rather than as women" before they can expect to rise in business and politics and, someday, see a woman in the presidency. Mr. Nixon's seizure of every opportunity to emphasize the work requirement in his welfare reform bill and to portray, with cynical falsity, the run of people on welfare as fakes and freeloaders is generally taken to be a means of appealing to voters who feel the same way. It is that. But it also is a reflection of Nixon himself, of the mean and cruel streak in him that flashes into view (as it occasionally did during NBC's working day with him) when the Nixon mouth turns down and the Nixon voice roughens.
—John Osborne, January 15, 1972

There was a comforting predictability about the Nixon of our youth. While not giving him great credit for depth of conviction, students of the old Nixon did suppose that, if he believed in anything, he believed in ultimate propositions: the sanctity of the free market and the wickedness of communism. Then, in two months last summer, without a backward look or apologetic word, he dumped both beliefs and embraced J. K. Galbraith and Mao Zedong. It shakes one's faith in human nature.
—Arthur Schlesinger Jr., February 26, 1972

Results aside, the fact that dominates the occasion is that Richard Nixon is here, buddying up with the leaders of the world's greatest Communist power and visibly enjoying his stay in the Kremlin, the cluster of domed temples and palaces and rather shabby office buildings which during most of his career was for him the capital and symbol of detested communism. The quality of pioneering adventure, of a break from the past that attended his visit to Peking in February is lacking. But the observer must pause at times and succumb to the wonder that this man, this seeming model of mediocrity, should be the first president of the United States to do what he has done this year, within four months, in Peking and now in Moscow.
—John Osborne, June 3, 1972

Only four months ago we shivered as the inaugural floats trundled by the reviewing stand across the way there over the sidewalks, with the jammed grandstands joyous as a football crowd. And last night in the Executive Wing, over there behind the iron rails, after his I-am-responsible T.V. speech, the president looked in for a minute at the press room, furnished as impersonally as the foyer of a middle-class motel, with its lectern at one end. . . . Nobody expected him; there were about forty angry still photographers who had been kept out of the projection room, and maybe eight or ten lounging reporters. . . . It was almost dark and you could barely see his features. The pancake makeup was beginning to streak, and he had just finished his pray-for-me exhortation to the nation, and God blessed them, and here he was giving an appearance husky and emotional to the press, and immediately thereafter slipping away in the dark just like that, though a couple of cameramen with fast strobe lights caught his gaunt look.
—TRB from Washington, May 12, 1973

One of the few White House assistants who has seen enough of the president in recent weeks to have a worthwhile impression of his mood and manner in private said the other day that Mr. Nixon reminds him of a man who has suffered "a searing wound"—here the assistant swept his right hand across his belly—and is trying to live with and forget the unforgettable pain. Another assistant who has spent a good deal of time with the president said that Mr. Nixon appeared to him to be going through one trauma after another, "peeling off layer after layer and finally getting down to the bitter core of truth."
—John Osborne, May 26, 1973

Thank God, he's gone. I'll miss him and I wish for him the mercy that he doesn't deserve and probably won't get.
—John Osborne, August 24, 1974 •

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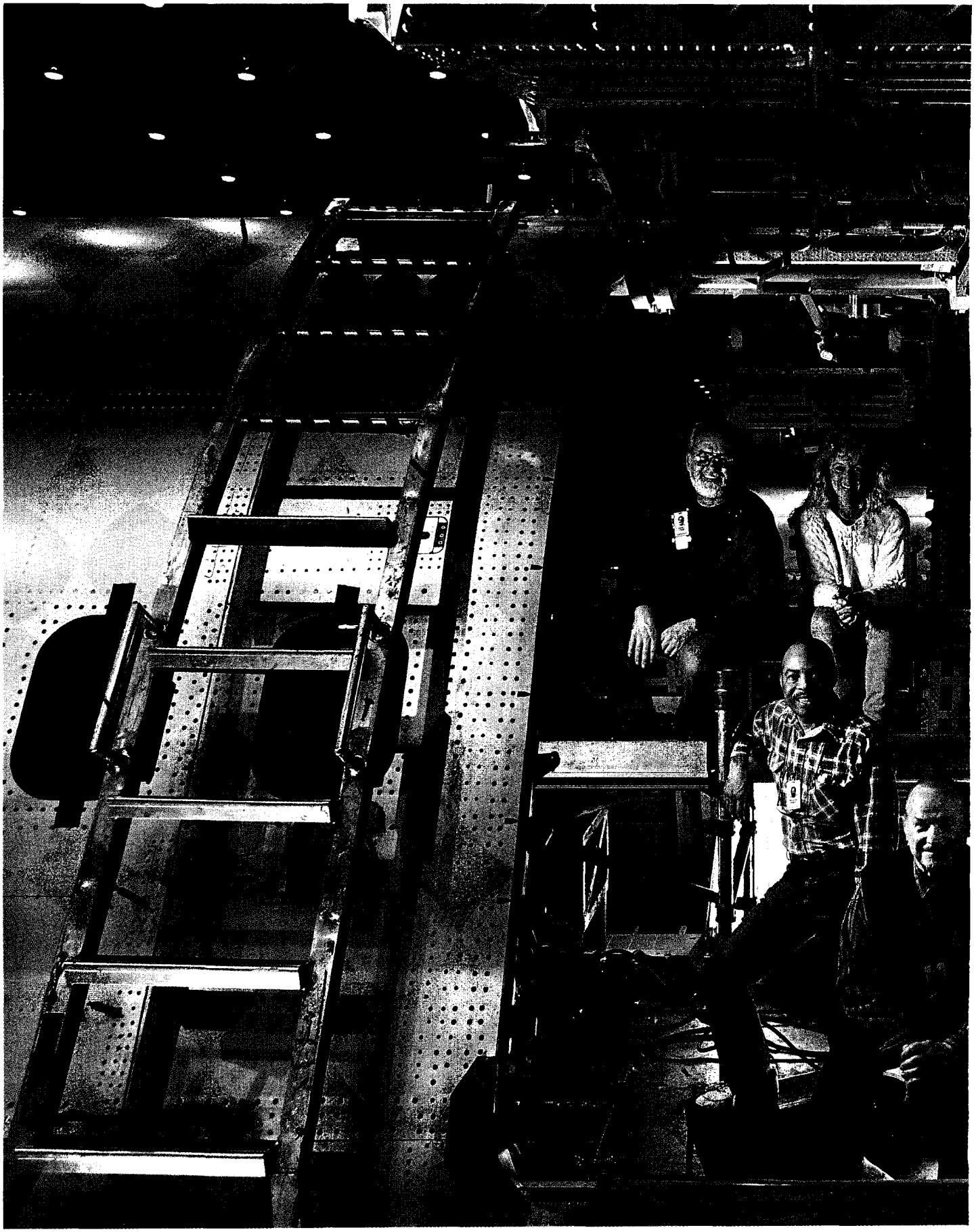

Top: John Todd, Sheila Skillman. Bottom: T.J. Seibert, Jay Skalka.

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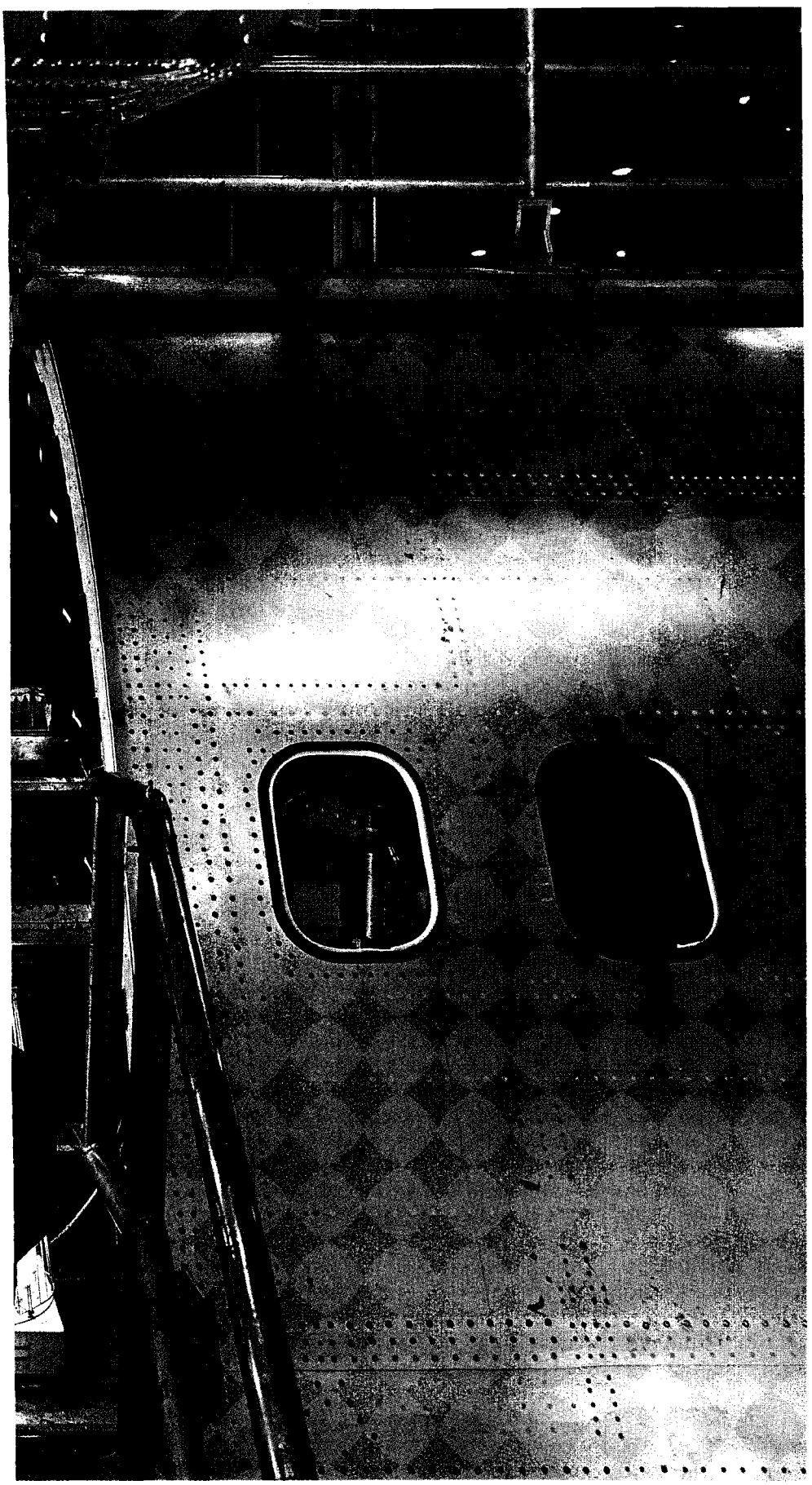

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The worst presidency of the century.

WHAT NIXON WROUGHT

By Jonathan Rauch

Nixon revisionism was probably inevitable, and no doubt will continue stronger than ever in the wake of its subject's death on April 22. The old caricatures—Nixon as villainous schemer, mad bomber, domestic underachiever—were bound to collapse, because they were built more on Nixon's personality than on his record. A more recent crowd, however, at a further remove from his presidency, is reconsidering that record. Look beyond Watergate, they say, and you find a blemished but strong presidency, tough and flexible abroad, innovative and liberal at home. If not for the scandal that finally brought him down, Richard Nixon would have gone down as not only a fine president but maybe even a great one.

Twenty years on, with the shadow of Watergate receding and the Nixon revisionists bringing a fresh spirit of objectivity to the subject, it's possible to take a clearer look at the Nixon record. But in doing so, one is taken aback. Even setting Watergate entirely to one side, as though it had never happened, Nixon must be put down as easily the worst president of the postwar era, and probably of this century.

The revisionists are right about one thing. Watergate, however deplorable, was pathology rather than policy. To help clarify the substantive record of those years, let's agree, then, to consider Nixon *without* considering Watergate. Let's also grant that Nixon's opening to China was a major accomplishment. It gave the Soviets a headache and recognized the reality of China not a moment too soon. So give him credit for China—and then set that, too, to one side, where it can (partially) offset the blot of Watergate. That done, the vast gray expanses that constitute the bulk of Nixon's record lie before us. And it's not a pretty sight.

The most important foreign policy event of Nixon's presidency was not China but the Vietnam War. In 1964 Lyndon Johnson campaigned against escalating the war; in 1965 he escalated it, with self-evidently grim results. And then he was destroyed. Having witnessed this, Nixon, amazingly, repeated the mistake—and of course the same mistake is a lot worse the second time you make it. "We will end this one and win the peace," Nixon told the voters in 1968. After the 1952 elections Eisenhower promptly got out of Korea, as he had promised. After the 1968 elections Nixon did not get out of Vietnam. Rather, he prosecuted the war seemingly endlessly while simultaneously negotiating to leave it. It was not war until victory, but war until escape. That a politician as supposedly astute as Nixon would carry on a losing war in open defiance of a public mandate to end it beggars belief. Nixon's secret bombings, his wartime lies, his betrayal of the voters all taught millions of Americans that government could not be trusted. Johnson had already betrayed the voters once, but they got rid of him. By the time Nixon had finished going Johnson one better, millions of Americans believed, with reason, that the government itself was a fountain of lies. On the day Nixon died Hillary Rodham Clinton wrestled with that legacy as she faced down the press on Whitewater.

Nixon's dallying in Vietnam left more than 15,000 additional Americans dead, to say nothing of more than half a million Vietnamese. If those lives had bought a better settlement in 1973 than could have been achieved in 1969, then perhaps they could be justified. But they bought nothing; the Americans left and in due course South Vietnam fell to the Communists, and that was that. To which add the rending of consensus as the war tore American culture into raging camps, one angrily radical and the other angrily reactionary; and the sapping of American confidence and morale as the fighting dragged on fruitlessly (the "Vietnam syndrome," the sense of weakness, "malaise"); and the financial cost, partly expressed as inflation; and the sheer scalding horror of the battle itself. To all of which, a gruesome codicil: by taking the war into Cambodia, Nixon turned Vietnam's neighbor into a Communist battleground with ultimate consequences, for the Cambodians, ghastly beyond words.

By comparison with Nixon's awful Vietnam policy, his détente with the Soviets was positively shining. Yet Nixon's effort to reduce U.S.-Soviet tensions without abandoning containment, if no disaster, hardly deserves accolades. Détente may have made the world a little safer, but it also eased pressure on the Soviets and so may have prolonged the Soviet era, and in any case it all came apart under Jimmy Carter when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979. As foreign policy, perhaps détente was no worse than a digression. However, its baleful effects on domestic policy remain underappreciated.

Although Ronald Reagan deserves ample credit for wrecking the government's finances, he could not have done it without Nixon's enthusiastic help. In 1969, when Nixon took office, Washington was spending about 20 percent of the gross domestic product. In 1975, after he left, it was spending 22 percent. A fairly big change; but the important part is what happened *within* the totals. In 1969 defense spending accounted for 9 percent of GDP, and entitlement programs for individuals accounted for a bit more than 6 percent. In 1975, just six years later, defense was down to 5.7 percent. Where did all that money go? The answer: by 1975 entitlement programs were up to more than 10 percent! By any standard, this was a staggering change to have made in only six years.

The post-Vietnam, post-détente military build-down

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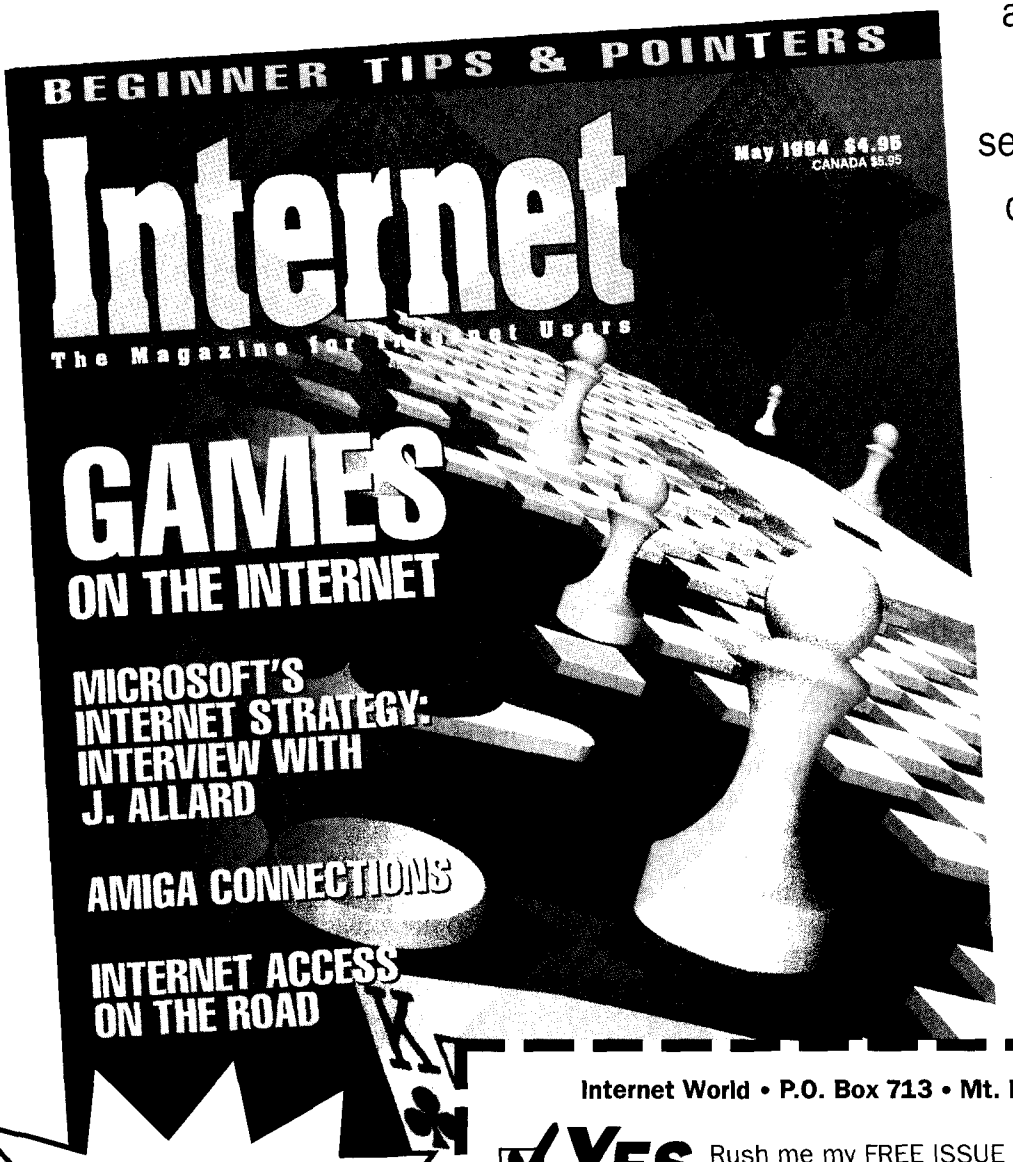

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may or may not have been justifiable on the merits. The problem was that when Nixon's delicate détente crashed, the party was over. President Carter began a military buildup that President Reagan turbocharged. What they did not do was pay for it. And a reason they didn't pay for it was that, short of political trench warfare, the giant amounts that Nixon had dumped into entitlements could not be recovered from the millions of beneficiaries who clung to them. With the prop of détente removed, the government found itself overexposed and overcommitted.

We are paying the price right now, in the form of large deficits that will not go away. Sure, Reaganomics took a bad situation and made it awful. But if Reagan ran the car into a ditch, it was Nixon who had disabled the brakes. The main structural elements of the deficit were put in place under Nixon: indeed, the deficit crisis had already begun to emerge during the Ford years and has crippled every president since. For twenty years we've been struggling with the structural consequences of Nixon's recklessness, and quite possibly, until someone tackles the entitlement programs, we will be struggling with it for a lot longer. And it has made an active and effective social policy virtually impossible.

Under Nixon, spending on the poor—means-tested spending—almost doubled as a share of GDP. But that was, and is, too small an amount to be the source of today's headaches. Look instead at spending on Social Security, Medicare and the other federal retirement programs, which go predominantly to the *non*poor. In 1969 they accounted for 4.2 percent of GDP; in 1975, 6.3 percent. (Today, it's 8.2 percent, but the increase since Nixon is largely due to Medicare, whose rising cost is part of the larger health care problem.) A big portion of the increase came in Social Security, and thereby hangs a tale.

In 1972 Wilbur Mills of Arkansas, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, took it into his head to run for president. What better way to grease the skids than with a little money for seniors? The Nixon White House grumbled, and at first resisted, but then gave in to a *permanent* 20 percent increase in Social Security benefits. It really was beautiful. Nixon signed the hike into law in September 1972, in time for beneficiaries to get their higher checks on October 1, a month before the election—and, in case anyone missed the point, the administration sent recipients a helpful reminder that their checks had swelled. The increase was so large that it accounted for more than half of the rise in personal income in the fourth quarter of 1972. Now, you can blame Mills for having set this gravy train in motion, but the president's job was to stop it, not to climb aboard waving his hat. One strains to think of another domestic policy action (the burying of the S&L crisis in the Reagan years?) so craven and costly.

This was all part of Nixon's re-election strategy, which was, among other things, to find every economic gas pedal he could and floor them. He threw money at the seniors. He instructed his Cabinet officers in early 1972 to spend as quickly as they could. He hounded the Federal Reserve to open the money spigots, which the Fed, misreading the economy, was inclined to do anyway. In 1972 growth of the money supply went stratospheric. And here arises the matter of inflation. Nixon disliked inflation, but not enough to sacrifice rapid growth—least of all with an election coming. And so his search for painless remedies led him to that monument of economic ineptitude, the wage and price controls that began in 1971 and didn't completely peter out until 1974.

They failed, of course. Despite the controls and (in the words of Herbert Stein, Nixon's Council of Economic Advisers chairman) "the national travail, the administrative costs ... the interference with investment in basic industries and economic distortions they caused," inflation pressed ahead (at 6.6 percent over the period). And when the controls came off, inflation surged still more. Nixon and his people, though chastened, never did get a handle on inflation. When they realized the cost of fighting it, they were unwilling to pay. "So," writes Stein in his book *Presidential Economics*, "they all went chasing off after panaceas." Before long, the situation was slipping out of control. The inflation of the 1970s placed the economy in greater danger than at any time since the Depression. In the end, stamping out the Nixon (and Carter) inflation pitched the country into the deepest recession since the Depression.

Twenty years later, we are still heaving from the aftershocks of the Great Inflation. It sparked the savings and loan crisis. It destroyed the Bretton Woods monetary system, for which we still have not found a very satisfactory replacement. It introduced permanent doubts about the soundness of money, doubts that still induce long-term investors to demand higher interest rates. It helped drive entitlement payments through the roof. Its collapse contributed, through the tax code and a soaring dollar, to the budget and trade deficits. In many ways large and small, the U.S. economy is to this day working through the thousand traumas of the inflation that Nixon helped to create and then failed to subdue.

We are still struggling with Nixon's racial policy, too. Johnson had been experimenting with requirements that federal contractors employ certain numbers of blacks and other minorities, but Nixon, notes University of Maryland historian Herman Belz, was the one who fought to retain the experiment and then expanded it to cover *all* federal contractors. "It was decisive executive branch support for color-conscious employment policies," says Belz, who is the author of a history of affirmative action. Here a distinction is important. Affirmative action can mean making an effort to find qualified minorities, or it can mean color-based targets and set-asides and dual standards and so on. It was Nixon who committed the government to the latter.

Policies that explicitly allocate jobs and money based on skin color and parentage have turned out to be factories of resentment, polarizing to a degree that is wildly out of proportion to their real importance (or their

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demonstrated benefits—blacks made their fastest economic gains before 1970). Twenty years on, despite evidence that race-based entitlements aggravate the racial problems they were intended to solve, they look as permanent as any other entitlement. It isn't fair to blame the Nixon people for failing to see that racial entitlements would take on a life of their own and become a bitter irritant, or to blame *only* the Nixon people. But a mistake is still a mistake.

No consideration of Nixon's record is complete without looking at what may, in the end, be seen as Nixon's most important legacy. Nixon was the Great Regulator. It was he who built the modern regulatory apparatus. Unlike the wage and price controls or the Vietnam policies, which were straightforwardly stupid, the regulatory legacy is complicated and hard to assess—and it is nothing as simple as a "mistake." Almost all would agree that we need some form of environmental protection. What is harder to defend, however, is the scale and speed and, indeed, reckless abandon with which Nixon regulated.

A partial list includes, in 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act; in 1970, the Poison Prevention Packaging Act, the Clean Air Amendments, the Occupational Safety and Health Act; in 1972, the Consumer Product Safety Act, the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, the Noise Pollution and Control Act, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act; in 1973, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act; in 1974, the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act. Nixon opened the Environmental Protection Agency, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Under Nixon the number of pages in the *Federal Register* (which publishes regulations) went from under 20,000 per year to three times that amount, where it has stayed ever since.

Thomas D. Hopkins, an economist at the Rochester Institute of Technology, estimates that the bill for all this regulation today comes to more than half a trillion dollars per year, or something like $5,000 per household. If it is true, as many economists argue, that the swelling mass of regulation is an important cause of the slowdown that has plagued the U.S. economy since about 1973, that still doesn't necessarily mean that the regulations aren't worth the cost. But there's the real problem. We don't know what all that money is buying, or even how to measure what it buys. How much is it worth to save spotted owls? To remove the last ounce of sulfur dioxide from the air? Even when we can measure benefits, the results are often ignored. Some of the regulatory system that Nixon built makes sense, but some of it is inefficient, irrational or just there because it's there. And, as Al Gore is now discovering, sorting through and rationalizing this steaming bureaucratic pile is an Augean job.

Nixon's regulatory revolution, then, was not a mistake in the same sense as his egregious bribe of the elderly, his Vietnam policies, his wage and price controls. We don't really know what it was. But the drive to do so much, so quickly, so permanently, all without knowing what we were doing or how to do it rationally or where it should end or even how to end it, was a mistake. And it was typical of Nixon, who through it all talked a pro-business, anti-regulatory game.

A caveat. I don't mean to imply that Nixon ran the whole country or was responsible for everything that happened. Most presidents can barely even run the government (it runs them). In all of the policies I've cited, Congress, the public, the lobbies and the flow of events played their roles. I also don't mean to imply that everything the Nixon people did was bad. They did some innovative social thinking (notably the failed proposal for a guaranteed annual income) and posted their share of minor to middling accomplishments.

Yet, on the record, it is hard to think of any other president in this century (Harding? Hoover?) whose tenure left the country with so many traumatic problems: Vietnam and its aftermath, runaway inflation, runaway entitlements, fiscal rupture, regulatory overkill. Any one of those (except maybe the last) is a mistake of the same magnitude as the Reagan deficits. Any two of them would be enough to consign Nixon to the bottom drawer. But all of them together! In the end, Nixon committed about as long a chain of devastating mistakes as it is possible for a single president to make, even in six years of trying hard. Worse, his mistakes have been gifts that keep on giving. We have spent the last two decades struggling to undo his errors, and may spend another two the same way. He left behind an embittered, polarized country, a nation disillusioned with its government, unsure of its place in the world, whiplashed by its economy and condemned to years of fiscal strife. If a good president builds confidence without making big mistakes, Nixon was as bad as they get.

JONATHAN RAUCH is the author of *Demosclerosis: The Silent Killer of American Government* (Times Books).

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Family Values

Ingmar Bergman, who retired from film directing twelve years ago, has not retired from filmmaking. Since 1982 he has written two screenplays, *The Best Intentions*, directed by Bille August (1992), and **Sunday's Children** (First Run), directed by his son Daniel and just released in the United States. (In addition he has published two books, an autobiography called *The Magic Lantern*, which is a Bergman work of art, and *Images*, a sort of supplemental volume. Some retirement.)

Like many another artist, Bergman is obsessed with his father—with his mother, too (about whom he made a short documentary in 1983), but principally his father. The autobiography delved into his childhood and youth and his father's courtship of his mother and the early, rocky years of their marriage. *Sunday's Children* is about the 8-year-old Ingmar and also the man he became at 50 and the relations that the two Ingmars had with his father in 1926 and in 1968.

The film is even more intricately familial: the director is Ingmar's son by his pianist wife, Käbi Laretei. While watching, I kept wondering about Daniel Bergman. He had been through plentiful seasoning in film work and had directed a short and some T.V.; still, this was his feature debut. That's nerve-racking enough for anyone, but this debutant had added burdens. The screenplay had been written by one of the greatest directors in film history, and Daniel's directing was inevitably going to be compared with his. More: that writer was his father. Even more: the leading characters were his father and his country-clergyman grandfather, along with his grandmother and assorted relatives. We might imagine that Daniel's first reaction, to the suggestion that he direct this film, would have been to jump out the window. Or, at least, leave Sweden.

However, it's good for all of us that Daniel took on the job. The film he has made, like August's Bergman film, is not an Ingmar imitation, it's his own. There is much more savoring here of natural beauty (with Tony Forsberg's camera) than Ingmar would have done—lovely woods and lake shores and old bridges. Perhaps one reason that Ingmar didn't want to make this film was that the panoply of nature was essential but not his directing métier.

Yet this indulgence, this remembrance of lakes past, is not the prime point of the enterprise. The author is in fact underscoring our self-deception in art about nature. Pantheists and other romantics have often given us the equivalent of these rustic idylls in Sweden, 1926, implying that the beauty of the world is an order to which mankind might aspire. "Every prospect pleases and only man is vile," said Bishop Heber. Nuts, says Bergman père. Nature is just part of the decor against which man is vile and is also a lot of other things.

The boy Ingmar learns that his clergyman father and his mother have a deep rift between them. He needs reassurance from them, reassurance that he is safe, that the world around him—so beautiful—is safe. One Sunday morning in summer he accompanies his father to a somewhat distant village where his father is to preach. On the way back, father and son strip and swim in a lake. It's lovely. What could be more reassuring, more comforting about the future, than that this boy and his father, who truly loves him, share this idyll. But idyllic moments guarantee nothing.

The numerous flash-forwards that weave through the film before and after this moment, sequences set in 1968 when the 50-year-old Ingmar visits his dying father, show that the communion of this idyll and of others has worn away. Increasingly the man Ingmar has seen that idylls are easy, that they don't counterbalance or obliterate grievous actions, betrayals and disappointments. The memory of the idylls becomes almost ironic.

Daniel Bergman has perceived this point. In fact he emphasizes it by making the 1968 scenes, all in the old father's apartment, visually attractive in their own way. The rooms are as rich and mellow in city style as the country kitchen and living room are in Vermeer style. Both city *and* country beauties, says the film, are merely decor, not ethical imperatives.

It's tempting to speculate on whether Ingmar helped Daniel (now 32) in the directing; but even if we assume that Ingmar kept hands strictly off, Daniel still couldn't devote himself to avoiding Ingmar influence. That would have been silly and wasteful. The scenes least like Ingmar are the enchanting pictorial ones, of which there are many. The scenes most like Ingmar are quarrels, particularly between husband and wife.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Four Weddings and a Funeral. *Hugh Grant buzzes brightly as the hero of this British comedy-romance, and Andie MacDowell almost takes off, too. Many delights. (Reviewed 4/4/94)* **The Paper.** *That American standby, the newspaper yarn, fast and tough and softhearted. Michael Keaton, as the hero, and Ron Howard, the director, are both better than usual. (4/18/94)* **A Tale of Winter.** *Another of Eric Rohmer's burnished studies of love and sex, small-scale but with resonances. A young Parisian woman loses her lover, then finds him again after much experience. (5/9/94)* **Thirty-Two Short Films about Glenn Gould.** *Unique, intelligent, witty, poignant. Re-created episodes and latter-day remembrances, delicately maneuvered by the writer-director François Girard. (4/25/94)* **—SK**

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Ingmar always had a way of putting antagonists face to face—he did it often—as if they were locked there, as if the quarrel had to be seen through to the bitter end, no matter how painful to the opponents. The pressing but unintrusive placement of the camera, the restrained editing, with as little cross-cutting from one face to another as possible, make us feel as if we were watching an epic encounter. (I've just seen it again in *Persona.*) Daniel has captured some of that feeling here.

Some of the elements in the picture seem, to an outsider, as much components of Swedish film as of Swedish life. I don't question the accuracy of Ingmar's memory—how could I?—I note only that other period films have prepared us for what were apparently Swedish universals: the jolly, bibulous uncle, for instance, who secretly hates his life; the nubile maid who loves the little boy and cares for him; the kindly country stationmaster.

But most of the screenplay is Ingmar territory, not least the fantasy elements, which remind us of *Hour of the Wolf, Fanny and Alexander* and more. A child born on a Sunday, as both Ingmar and his father were, is said to be gifted with special sight, the ability to see ghosts and fairies and such; and once the boy Ingmar is told that he possesses this power, his imagination does the rest. This gift remained with the artist. It enabled the grown man to see the ghosts inside living people.

As the young father, Thommy Berggren, once the ardent lover in *Elvira Madigan,* is firm yet pitiable; as the aged father, he is only the latter. Lena Endre is reticently strong as the wife and mother. The boy Ingmar (nicknamed Pu) is played by Henrik Linnros, who has imagination, and the director has found it. Per Myrberg, as the mature Ingmar, has the right face and air. It isn't a matter of resembling Ingmar, which he does not; tacitly, he conveys the sum of the years.

Daniel Bergman uses music well. There isn't much of it (nor is there in Ingmar's films), mostly a guitar. This helps the (deceptively) lyric quality of the film. Occasionally, however, there is a passage from Bach, possibly serving the same purpose as the Bach in *Persona.* It's more pertinent than nature as a standard for humankind because it is man-made, and its perfection is therefore all the more galling and humbling. •

Of Human Bondage

BY MICHAEL SCAMMELL

The Politics of Cruelty: An Essay on the Literature of Political Imprisonment by Kate Millett

(W. W. Norton, 335 pp., $23)

Kate Millett came to prominence some twenty-five years ago with *Sexual Politics,* a masterly study of sex and power that quickly achieved the status of a feminist classic. Since then she has published five more books, none of which has rivaled it in authoritativeness, scope or popularity, but which together have sought to extend her criticism of the relations between the sexes and the uses (or more often abuses) of sexual power, especially as directed at women. Now, in her sixth book, she turns her attention to the difficult subject of torture, which has everything to do with power and its abuses, but is not generally subsumed under gender relations. Its title seems to allude to her first book, however, and invites comparison with its illustrious predecessor.

In a brief introduction Millett holds that torture as an instrument of official policy was largely abolished by the European powers by the beginning of the nineteenth century; and that this triumph of liberal reform has been negated in the twentieth century by the widespread reappearance of torture, especially as a response to political dissent. Whereas torture was reserved, in former times, for civil crimes and was regulated by legal procedures, it has now become a political weapon of the state and is directed against what the state "imagines to be subversion."

In its new form, torture is more threatening and more dangerous than before, because it is associated with the irresistible power of the modern state. According to Millett, the foundations of the modern state were laid by Lenin, who created a model of total state power, "with its demands for security and

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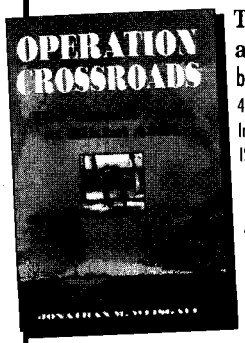

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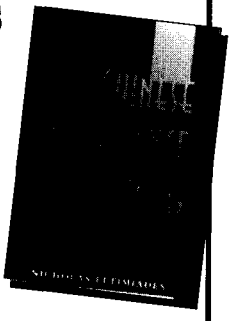

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surveillance," that was taken over and refined by Stalin and Hitler. And this model "lives on in many parts of the world" because it has been "imitated by colonial powers and Western democracies." If that last statement makes you blink, you are to remember that it refers to the colonialist policies of West European democracies such as France and Britain, and to the post-colonialist policies of the United States.

Millett's book is eclectic, somewhat in the manner of *Sexual Politics*, but it is also decidedly eccentric, which the earlier book was not. In its first part, "The Mechanism," and in its third part, "Recent Politics of Cruelty in Action," Millet offers a sweeping survey of torture, and it seems at first glance that all the requisite political bases have been touched to achieve an impression of evenhandedness. A closer look, however, reveals some odd disproportions. Out of a total of eleven chapters, the Gulag and the Holocaust get one chapter each, while the evils of Western colonialism get six (or possibly seven) chapters. Mao's China gets a third of a chapter, Iran half a chapter—and British Ireland a whole chapter. Meanwhile, sandwiched between the two historical sections is a section called "Imagination," which consists of a discussion of the French writer Georges Bataille and the eroticism of torture; it seems to have wandered in from some other book altogether.

There are also serious methodological problems. Millett subtitles her book "An Essay on the Literature of Political Imprisonment," and her procedure is to take published work—or works—on the country or subject under discussion, paraphrase their contents and insert her own commentary as the paraphrase proceeds. The most striking aspect of her sources is the diversity of genres, which range from fiction to documentary to fictionalized biography to autobiography to biographical fiction, not to speak of two movies and a handful of scholarly works. Yet each of these sources is treated as literally factual, with no distinction made between the sayings and doings of fictional characters and the historical actions of real people.

Thus Innokenty Volodin, the fictional protagonist of *The First Circle*, is described and analyzed in exactly the same terms as Primo Levi, the actual survivor of Auschwitz; Henri Alleg, the real Algerian editor who was tortured by the French, is discussed with the same degree of emotion as Sis Ida, a fictional character in Sipho Sepamla's South African novel, *A Ride on the Whirlwind*. In the universe of Millett's book their experiences are endowed with equal ontological weight and validity, as are the experiences of the real and imaginary people described later in her work. (In the case of the movie *Closet Land*, we never do find out whether the events and the people depicted are real or imaginary.)

Now it is undoubtedly true that fictional, autobiographical and documentary works all relate in some way to the world as we know it, and that works of the imagination speak to us about that world just as surely as documentaries or autobiographies. Blurring the boundaries between different genres can also be legitimate if the boundaries are recognized in the first place, and if the procedure of blurring is explicitly acknowledged and explained. But to treat such disparate sources as identical in kind and as equal in veracity, to assign them equal weight without the least discussion of the implications of their genre for their meaning, is not at all what one expects from the author of *Sexual Politics*. Whereas in that book the autonomy of the works discussed was respected, and the citations from them subjected to critical analysis, here the works are plundered for circumstantial evidence, and the citations are trotted out as transparent repositories of fact. Millett's subtitle, "An Essay on the Literature of Political Imprisonment," is misleading. Her essay is not about literature at all, it is about "political imprisonment," using literature in an unsophisticated way as raw material for her purposes.

Even this approach might have worked, if applied with a modicum of tact and knowledge; but this *The Politics of Cruelty* fails to do. An example of its crudity is to be found already in its opening chapter. Millett describes Solzhenitsyn's fictional diplomat, Volodin, as if he were a real person, and attempts to arouse the reader's sympathy for this "innocent hero" by entering into his intimate fears after his arrest and recounting them in a breathless present tense. The problem with this is twofold. First, the real-life counterpart of Volodin, on whom Solzhenitsyn based his plot, was arrested for trying to warn the American Embassy about a Soviet spy in New York (that is, for behaving approximately as Aldrich Ames allegedly did in turning American spies over to the Soviets). Secondly, Solzhenitsyn published a later version of *The First Circle*, in which he portrayed Volodin not as someone subject to a generous impulse, but as a calculating diplomat; Solzhenitsyn announced this edition in a memoir that appeared in English in 1980. Neither of these things would have mattered if Millett hadn't chosen to treat the fictional Volodin as "real," nor does the fact that Volodin was in effect guilty of treason justify torture. Still, these circumstances do endow this particular instance with considerable ambiguity, and one can't help thinking that had Millett known of these facts (as she should have), she would either have chosen another example altogether, or at least have acknowledged the complexities of the example that she chose.

But it is unfathomable why Millett should have gone to a fictional source such as *The First Circle* when Solzhenitsyn has written a three-volume documentary history of the Gulag. *The Gulag Archipelago* is not only his masterpiece, it also bristles with hard information about the camp system, including numerous passages about his own experiences. Equally puzzling is the title of Millett's chapter, "Solzhenitsyn and the Creation of the Gulag," which promises far more than it delivers. Solzhenitsyn himself, in *The Gulag Archipelago*, dated the creation of the Gulag, somewhat controversially, to 1921. Even if one were to go with Stalin in his prime as the real originator of the Gulag, this would still place the creation in the early '30s, a period when, as Solzhenitsyn has also acknowledged, the torture and the terror visited upon political opponents or suspects vastly exceeded the repressions inflicted at the time when he was arrested. Solzhenitsyn was a latecomer; he was imprisoned after World War II, when the Gulag, from the point of view of its savagery, was already in decline. Its cruelties have been documented in a vast literature, beside which *The First Circle* pales as a source of information.

To rest the opening chapter of a book about torture on such ramshackle foundations shows extraordinarily poor judgment. One suspects that the true reason for this negligence is to be found in Millett's larger design. A single chapter on the Gulag and a single one on the Holocaust suggest that they are not much more than tokens, thrown in to provide the semblance of a political balance, while their true weight in the history of our century's cruelty is slighted in the interests of another agenda. They appear at the beginning of the book as "preparations" for the later horrors of colonialism; and this may be why Millett judged it unimportant whether she took a work of fiction or of fact for her Gulag text. In the case of the Holocaust, fortunately, she shows more tact, taking a documentary movie and an autobiography for her sources, but this still does not justify the brevity of her treatment.

This superficial reading of her material infects even the best sections of Millett's book, its two chapters on the excesses of the United States in Latin

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America. Millett is understandably angered by crimes committed by her fellow countrymen; it may be indignation over American policies that drove her to write about this subject in the first place. The indignation does her honor; but it would have been more admirable if it were explicitly acknowledged. It is a measure of her confusion that even here she seems out of her depth, portraying the policies of the United States on the one hand as the logical culmination of a process started by Lenin, and on the other hand as the result of the cold war. By the amount of space she assigns to these policies in her chosen context, she also manages to imply that they are worse than anything preceding them in our century.

They were bad enough, of course, and any thinking American has to be ashamed of the support lent by the American military in the '70s and early '80s to the military dictatorships of Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and so on, not to mention American complicity in the crimes of right-wing juntas in Guatemala and El Salvador up to our own day. But in a book that purports to be objective, and to be about torture and cruelty in the twentieth century, it will not do to stack the deck as Millett does. One wonders, reading these pages, just how much homework she has really done, for in her list of countries exemplifying the national security state she omits Chile, the most celebrated example of all, and includes Venezuela, the only fully functioning democracy in South America during the period in question. She also includes Peru, which was far from being militarized in the '70s and early '80s, and had barely heard of the Shining Path at the time.

Moreover, in describing the deplorable arrests, tortures and executions carried out in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and so on, she portrays them as the simple result of a "war" carried out by evil fascist governments against a virtuous and innocent citizenry. Only here and there does Millett let slip that the story is more complicated. She reveals, for example, that Alicia Partnoy, the author of a book on government terror in Argentina, was a Perónist and an "activist," that the two Uruguayans mentioned in her final pages were members of a guerrilla organization—and that Henri Alleg, in the Algerian chapter, was a member of the Communist Party. Most of the victims of repression and torture were not picked at random, and it was by no means a campaign against "all" citizens *regardless of their circumstances*. This is not to justify the repression, nor to suggest that the victims were necessar-

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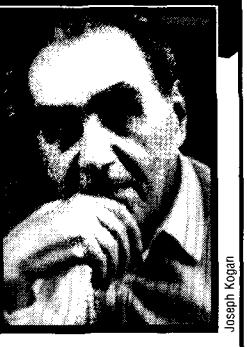
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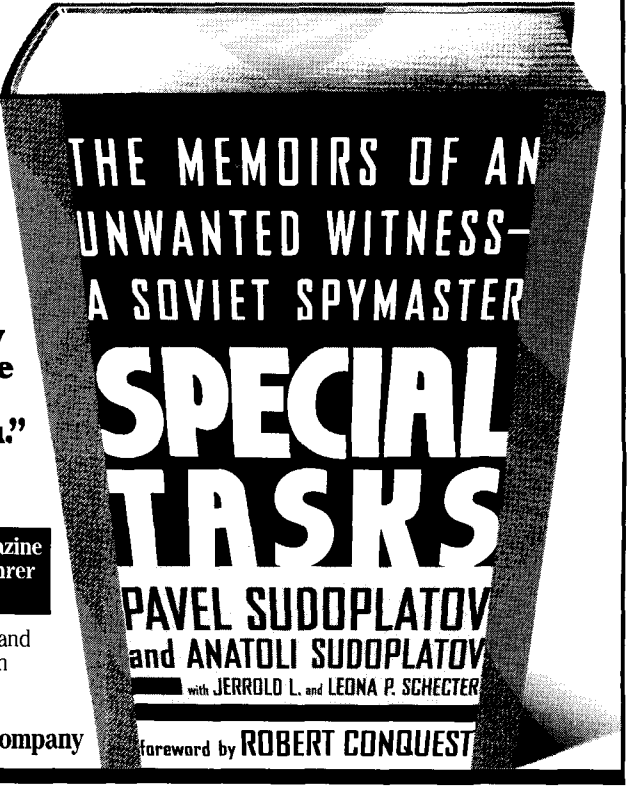
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ily guilty, but to present the full picture.

Millett similarly neglects to mention that the instability that brought military regimes to power in South America was connected to the violence and the terrorism committed by guerrilla forces such as the Montoneros in Argentina and the Tupamaros in Uruguay (which destabilized the peacefully functioning democracy of the "Switzerland" of South America). Even in Chile, where there were no guerrillas, only an erratic left-wing government in an uneasy relationship with the military, it was demonstrations by the frightened middle classes that finally emboldened the military to take over.

There was a reason for those middle-class jitters, and its name was Cuba. Cuba is not mentioned once in Millett's chapters on Latin America. From her account you would not know that Cuba successfully concealed its own torture of political prisoners, and so in the early '70s it seemed like a wonderful success story, and exercised an enormous fascination for the intellectuals of the continent. Nor would you learn of the activities of Che Guevara, whose doctrine of guerrilla subversion influenced both the Montoneros and the Tupamaros, especially after his death in action in Bolivia. It was Cuba's example that drew the United States into the fray. Millett is right to portray many of the excesses that took place, and the United States's role in them, as among the consequences of the cold war; but she never mentions that the cold war was fought by two sides, or that the cold war became warm (if not hot) when the Castro-inspired guerrillas went into action. The military in Latin America, and the upper and middle classes, had no need for the United States to force them into action, even if they welcomed American support afterward.

This, too, does not extenuate the ferocity of the military response, or the doctrine of the "dirty war" that was invoked, especially in Argentina, to justify the terror. Nor does it extenuate the role of the United States insofar as it supported those policies. But the American role was far from being as monolithic as Millett paints it. The State Department and the diplomatic corps never wholeheartedly supported the excesses of the American Special Forces. In the mid-'70s, in Santiago and in Buenos Aires (and in Johannesburg, for that matter), it was through the American Embassies that many human rights workers were able to communicate with local dissidents, especially after Jimmy Carter's election. It serves no useful purpose to ignore or to obfuscate these facts just because they complicate the picture.

When Millett is not promoting her politics, she has some apposite and timely (although hardly original) observations to make about the practice of torture itself. She points, among other things, to the role of modern technology, ranging from the revolution in communications that enables governments to spy on, monitor and arrest their citizens with ever greater ease; to improvements in medical knowledge, which make it possible to apply electric shocks to the body in carefully calibrated doses, or to administer sophisticated drugs without fear of discovery. Technology reinforces the array of weapons and equipment at the disposal of the state to impose its will, and enables it to construct ever more impregnable prisons and places of confinement.

Millett also describes the terrible psychological battle that is joined between torturer and tortured. On one level this battle reflects the paranoia of the state itself, which sees (or suspects) subversion at every step, and would rather arrest 100 innocent suspects than let a single guilty man go free. The state in turn empowers the torturer, whose aim is always to convince his victim of the torturer's (and state's) omnipotence and of the individual's utter helplessness, that is, to bend the victim utterly to his will. To this end the victim is blindfolded, stripped, manipulated, deprived of dignity, humiliated, degraded and subjected to every possible kind of deception, in which cruelty is alternated with seeming kindness, reprieve with renewed punishment and hope with despair. In the end it doesn't matter to the torturer if even madness supervenes: the main thing is to force the victim to submit, to confess, to talk and preferably to name names—so that the torturers (and the state) are confirmed in their paranoia, and are provided with new victims on whom to practice their black arts.

On all these aspects of torture, shorn of their political context, Millett is convincing and believable. Initially she also seems justified in devoting a very large proportion of her book to graphic descriptions of physical torture in all its manifestations, ranging from ingenious methods of cramped confinement to the infliction of every possible variety of pain on the human body. The cumulative effect is overpowering and salutary. No one reading these pages, mostly transcribed from eyewitness testimony and direct experience, should remain in any doubt about the evil nature of these procedures, or about their degrading consequences for tortured and torturer alike (though hardly in equal degree). But gradually the reader of Millett's graphic pages begins to experience a growing nausea, and a feeling of protest at being forced to wade through so much gore.

Is there not an element of voyeurism in these endless peep shows of prisoners being reduced to animal status by sadistic torturers? Do the shortage of argument and excess of "action" not lead us in the direction of political pornography? To her credit, Millett addresses this question in her chapter on photography, but her answers are rather disquieting.

The theme of the chapter is the shock produced in viewers by photographs of torture or extreme suffering, and the nature of the viewers' (including Millett's own) psychological reactions. Millett writes that it was the sight of a book cover depicting the crucifixion of a young Cambodian boy that planted the idea for the present book in her mind, and she discusses at some length her reactions to her friend's photograph of a black South African policeman who had been necklaced and was burning to death, watched by a crowd of onlookers.

The main body of the chapter, however, is devoted to a book by Georges Bataille called *The Tears of Eros*, and in particular to three photographs it contains of the "torture of a hundred pieces" in China in 1905, in which the victim is tied to a pole by a mob in the street and slowly dismembered, while being kept alive for as long as possible. Millett considers the possibility, which was first raised by Bataille, that some might find these photographs exciting or titillating. But she rejects the notion with the same self-righteousness with which she has earlier rejected her friend's explanation of the photograph of the burning policeman: "What one is being persuaded toward, the erotic character of cruelty, its inherent capacity for sexual arousal, doesn't work in my case; it fails to arouse me sexually, but it does make me angry."

This statement of anger is renewed at intervals throughout the discussion, but it appears to be contradicted by the very seriousness with which she takes the eroticism of cruelty in the first place. Denials, if repeated often enough, soon come to sound like their opposite, especially in light of the peculiar way that Bataille's photographs are introduced and discussed, which follows the classic pattern of pornography.

Thus the reader's interest is aroused and titillated at the very beginning of Millett's account by the information that her subject is going to be "the identification of the cruel with the sexual," followed by a quick reference to something

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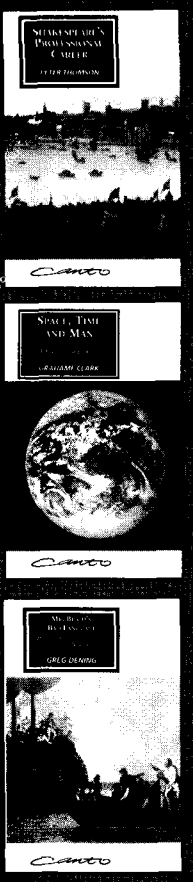
called the "Chinese torture of a hundred pieces," without further explanation. One is then told that the student who has introduced Millett to the subject is enthralled by the idea of a man being "cut into pieces while alive," and has persuaded Millett to examine Bataille's work. The next page contains another passing reference to someone being "carved into pieces," and on the page after that Millett actually takes Bataille's book into her hands and describes her first sight of the three photographs, with a brief description of their contents. The text digresses, comes back for another description, digresses again, circles back again for a closer look and, according to the iron law of deferred pleasure, continues in this tantalizing manner for several more pages, each time lingering for a longer and more detailed description of the dismemberment. All the while the author intersperses her text with expressions of indignation and anger, blaming her student, Bataille, and even the crowd of onlookers depicted in the photographs, for their perverse enjoyment of this spectacle, which is contrasted with her own praiseworthy failure to be seduced by it.

The problem is that she *is* seduced. The evidence is there on the page. Trust the tale, said Lawrence, not the teller. There can be no other explanation for the extraordinary detail of this chapter, and for the loving fascination with which Millett returns to the torture images again and again. One supposes that the chapter's structure—and its very inclusion—were dictated by unconscious drives of which Millett was probably unaware, and that her creative instincts as a writer got the better of her. But in its present form it reminds one of nothing so much as one of those indignant tirades against "obscenity" that were favored by middle-class moralists a generation ago, in which lubricious descriptions of erotic images far exceeded in their persuasiveness the pious exhortations to resist them and look the other way.

Another indication that Millett has lost control of her material comes at the end of this discussion. Having brought her descriptions of the Chinese torture to a crescendo in a paragraph in which the victim's agony is juxtaposed with repeated use of the word "erotic" (always to deny the connection, of course), she concludes that Bataille represents the very essence of masculinity, and in fact stands for "Western man" in toto, expressing the quintessence of "Western eroticism." Even more, Bataille, the *interpreter* of "eroticism as Western man understands it," combines sexism with sadism and racism:



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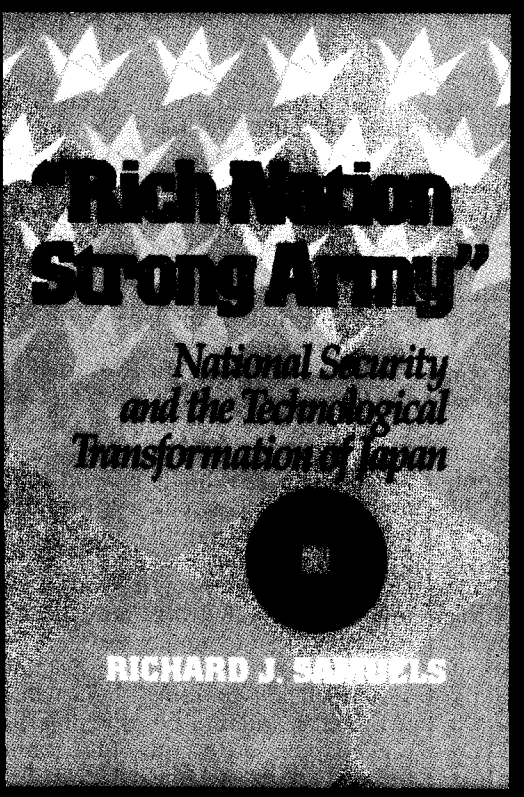

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The inclusion of this photograph tells us much about Bataille but even more about his culture and his time. All its basic assumptions seem to be demonstrated in what is presented as the ultimate erotic image—the image of an Oriental in the process of being tormented to death.

The connection between torture and sadomasochism that Millett is groping for here is a convincing one, and might have led, in surer hands, to some interesting analysis of the type of the torturer and the forces in various societies that empower torturers. But Millett is so frantic to lash out at her preferred targets of the male sex and the West that Bataille is no longer Bataille, an eccentric and complicated French thinker, but the standard-bearer of "Western man," whose perverse view of eroticism embodies the perversity of the entirety of his gender.

Meanwhile Millett can spare no time for the meaning of the torture itself, or for the thought that the pictures might just have something to say about Oriental culture as well as about Occidental ways. Indeed, in her lust to convict the West of all possible sins, she explicitly exculpates the gaping crowd gathered to watch this torture fest of any erotic motive. Their faces are "rapt" and "filled with concentration," but at least they are free of that "Western voyeurism" that infects Bataille and the whole of Western mankind, though not herself.

By this point we have come a long way from the politics of torture and imprisonment that are the ostensible subjects of the book. Millett returns us to them after this extraordinary interlude, but her credibility has been undermined, and the eloquence of her final chapters is further undercut by their inaccuracies. As one reads on, one is also struck by another subversive thought. Millett writes in a breathless present tense that seeks to endow her material with a spurious immediacy, but the events that she describes are as old as 1908, and many of them happened only in books (where they appeared in the past tense).

Millett's message is that torture is an immense problem here and now, that needs to be tackled and overcome this very minute. She may be right; but the curious fact is that the majority of the situations that she describes are well in the past. The regimes responsible for the Holocaust, the Gulag, apartheid and the military atrocities of South America have all ended. They have all left disturbing legacies, and some might conceivably return, but they are not the real and present danger so shrilly conjured here.

The fact is that while Millett has chosen a truly important subject for her book, she has failed to come fully to grips with it, or indeed to add anything original to what has already been said by others. Moreover, she obfuscates her discussion of torture's genuine evils by relating them to a tendentious political schema that only distracts the reader from what is most noxious and universal about torture in all its guises. One can only guess at the reasons for this failure, but it would seem to be connected with the author's impulse to redirect attention constantly from the grim events and appalling subject matter under discussion to her own responses to them, which come across as forced and ultimately insincere. Perhaps this narcissism is the fruit of Millett's early success, and if so it is a terrible pity, for if ever there was a subject that demanded discipline, self-restraint and humility, that subject is torture.

MICHAEL SCAMMELL was the founder and first editor of *Index on Censorship.* He is writing a biography of Arthur Koestler.

Recline and Fall

BY RICHARD JENKYNS

The Stranger Wilde: Interpreting Oscar by Gary Schmidgall

(Dutton/William Abrahams, 494 pp., $25.95)

Suppose that Byron had not caught a fever at Missolonghi or Shelley had not drowned in the Gulf of Spezia. Their deaths were pure accident; had they been granted their natural span of life, they would have lived on deep into the Victorian age, and it is intriguing to think of them assuming frock coats and (who knows?) respectable attitudes. Yet we instinctively think of them as young men who could not grow old. Their early deaths seem part and parcel of their romanticism. Retrospectively, and falsely, we fancy that the lives of the great have a predestinate pattern.

Of no writer is this more insidiously true than Oscar Wilde. Even in his lifetime people remarked that his fall had the terrible shape and clarity of a Greek tragedy. Wilde himself shared this view; it is a recurrent theme in his *De Profundis.* "The gods had given me almost everything. I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring"—and as in Sophocles, the gods destroyed him. A fatal overconfidence led him into the libel suit against Lord Queensberry, which led to exposure, prison and ruin. It was a peripeteia according to the purest Aristotelian rules. And the plot proceeded to dispose quickly of the leading players. The most pathetic figure in the whole miserable story, Wilde's wife, Constance, understanding, forgiving, despised by her husband, died in Genoa, sick and alone, in 1898. Wilde himself died two years later in Paris, in the last year of the nineteenth century. His is the classic tragedy of the fin de siècle, and when the century went, so did he.

And yet there was no inevitability about it. Queensberry had left his famously misspelled insult, "To Oscar Wilde posing as a somdomite." (That, at least, is the version that was fought over in court; according to Richard Ellmann, the words had actually been "posing somdomite," a graver though accurate charge.) It was crazy of Wilde to pick up the challenge. All he had to do was ignore it. If he had not sued Queensberry, he need not have been jailed, and if he had not been jailed, his health and his will to live need not have been broken. We can easily imagine him surviving into the 1920s, or even beyond. (His fellow Irishman, George Bernard Shaw, only two years younger, lasted until 1950.) He would have responded in some way to the First World War and the Irish uprising, though in neither case is it easy to guess what his attitude would have been. In the 1920s he might have ranked with Thomas Hardy as a grand old man of British letters.

The emphasis in Gary Schmidgall's lively book is rather different. He dances merrily around Wilde, looking at him from various angles, but returning again and again to one theme. For him, Wilde's homosexuality is the central and dominant fact of his life, deliberately if covertly presented throughout his work. Schmidgall sees him as an out-

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and-out rebel, social and sexual. At times he seems near to claiming that Wilde intentionally courted his doom. He insists, too, that Wilde, whatever the outward appearance of frivolity, was consistently a serious thinker with a serious purpose, a man who did believe in the importance of being, if not seeming, earnest.

Schmidgall asks whether the idea of Wilde the gay martyr is the right one. For a while he seems skeptical, but in the end it is more or less the picture that he offers. Yet Wilde will hardly do as the patron saint of gay liberation. One reason is simple, though it is usually forgotten: far from admitting to homosexual practices, Wilde actually sued the man who accused him of them. Another reason is less obvious. When the tormented hero of E. M. Forster's *Maurice* goes for advice to the family doctor, he explains that he is "an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort." But Wilde was not an invert, to use the old word, searching like Maurice for a virile gamekeeper. He seems to have been a bisexual with a very strong pederastic streak; he liked youths or young men of feminine appearance. He might have been hardly more comfortable on Castro Street than John Wayne. Oscar Wilde was not exactly an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort.

Schmidgall, too, likes to play the "What if?" game, but in a confessedly whimsical style. What, he asks, if Wilde were alive today? He fancies him settling in San Francisco, quoting a remark of Lord Henry Wotton in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "It is an odd thing, but everyone who disappears is said to be seen at San Francisco. It must be a delightful city, and possess all the attractions of the next world." This strikes the wrong note (and the dark suspicion arises that Schmidgall has missed the irony). "There can be little doubt," Schmidgall declares, "that [Wilde] would show himself staunchly P.C. and fully in accord with the feminist agenda." It is a little hard to imagine Wilde being staunchly anything, but in any case Schmidgall forgets that he hated priggishness and puritanism. And he liked to make fashion, not to follow it.

The face that looks out at us from the photographs of Wilde looks so modern—and, with its long horsey features, so English—that it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that he is one of us. But he is not. His attitudes were essentially aristocratic. This was partly in the simple social sense: he valued that distinguished name and high position, and he minded that a marquess should leave an

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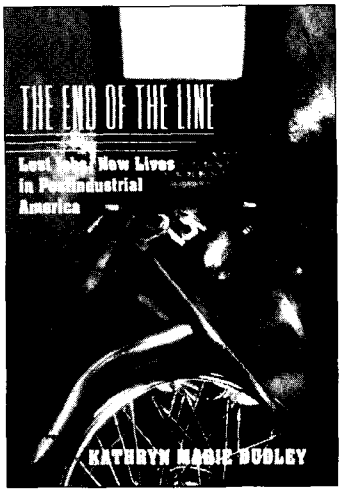

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insulting note in his club—a fact that Queensberry was able to exploit. But his whole cast of mind was aristocratic in a larger sense. There is no sin, he said, but stupidity. His aesthetic creed was an invitation to join an exclusive society from which philistines and commonplace people were kept out.

Schmidgall has Ellmann's authority for the claim that Wilde "belongs to our world more than to Victoria's," but it is an illusion. It is significant that his contemporaries saw him as born too late, not too early. Richard Le Gallienne described him as a "sort of caricature Dionysus disguised as a rather heavy dandy of the Regency period," Ada Leverson as "a Roman emperor who should have lived at the Pavilion at Brighton with George IV." His aestheticism, too, marks the end of an old story rather than the start of a new one. Wilde's ideas, insofar as he had ideas rather than attitudes, were a good deal less original than Schmidgall supposes. "I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art," he wrote; but it was Walter Pater who had done that.

Pater was the prophet of the aesthetic idea, and Wilde added little to it beyond a greater flamboyance of manner. And before Pater, Matthew Arnold had believed passionately that culture had a moral dimension and was necessary for the health of individuals and societies, though he was never able to work out satisfactorily how to relate culture to the inherited morality of the Christian tradition. Disarmingly, Arnold described how his opponents misunderstood him: "The 'religion of culture'... is said to be a religion proposing parmaceti, or some scented salve or other, as a cure for human miseries"—with Arnold himself handing round his pouncet-box in the midst of the general tribulation. What Wilde did, in effect, was to take this caricature and make it reality.

If Wilde were such a fierce rebel, how did he come to be the darling of fashionable society? Schmidgall faces up to this difficulty, but it is not clear that he has an answer. He has a fascinating chapter on the lampoons of the aesthetic movement that appeared in *Punch*, from which it becomes clear how freely its homoerotic flavor was recognized. "How consummately lovely your Son is, Mrs. Brown!" says the painter Maudle to a middle-class mother in the caption of one cartoon; he is depicted in a posture of effeminate semi-recumbency. Another cartoon, called "Nincompoopiana," shows a group of aesthetes arranged in limp poses, with a bust of Antinous, the beautiful youth once loved by the Emperor Hadrian, in the background. Victorian society was remarkably tolerant of pederastic sentiment, provided it was of a milk-and-water kind. Most surprisingly, this tolerance was not obliterated by Wilde's conviction; *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, edited by the irreproachable Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, contains some (poor) sonnets by the Reverend E.C. Lefroy about handsome teenage sportsmen.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

This does not mean that Wilde was brought down by hypocrisy. In the first place, there is a wide distance between the sentimental adoration of good-looking young men and sodomy. A good many Victorians could put up with the former; the vast majority of them abhorred the latter. In the second place, the police were forced to arrest Wilde by the exposure that he had brought upon himself; Schmidgall acknowledges that they were aware of many other such cases, against which they had not acted. Wilde let himself be openly seen in the company not only of Alfred Douglas, but also of male prostitutes. The significant thing is that he thought he could get away with it.

Schmidgall contrasts Wilde's "self-outing" with Pater's "life lived so resolutely in the Closet," but this is unjust. Pater was certainly a private and reticent man, and one presumes that his homosexuality received no physical expression, but he more than anyone gave the aesthetic movement its homoerotic tone, and within the limits imposed by the mores of his age and his own sense of decorum, he was open enough—at moments, remarkably explicit. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, on the other hand, the homoerotic tone is given to characters who are represented as either weak or bad. "Self-outing," of course, is quite wrong: Wilde sued his accuser, and there is no good reason to suppose that even on a subconscious level he wanted to expose himself.

Schmidgall has a good discussion of Wilde's fairy stories, and his argument that there are homosexual subtexts in them deserves to be taken seriously. Less happy is his attempt to take the same approach to *The Importance of Being Earnest*. There is just a fragment of possible truth here: both Jack and Algernon have double or invented lives—Jack pretending to be his own brother, Ernest, when he is up in town, Algernon fabricating a friend, Bunbury, whom he purports to visit when he wants to get out of unwelcome engagements—and it is conceivable that this idea was suggested to Wilde by his own secret pursuits. But even if this is true, it does not follow that the play itself is covertly subversive or suggestive, and to claim this is to miss its peculiar genius.

Shaw, who hated *The Importance of Being Earnest*, called it Wilde's "first

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really heartless play." He was right in a way, though he drew the wrong conclusion. It is quite unlike any of his other plays, with their tuggings at the heartstrings: it is the quintessence of pure levity. In Wilde's own words, "It is quite nonsensical and has no serious interest." It creates a world in which no one can suffer real pain or passion, and in which no one can possibly mean what he says. We expect each of the characters to doff the mask at any moment and reveal the actor underneath. As if joined together in some conspiracy or private joke, they all speak the same idiolect; their style is the transcendence of facetiousness.

This manner was to be taken up by Saki and, with the influence of Kipling's school stories added, by the young Wodehouse, and it may be Wodehouse who makes the most illuminating parallel. "The rigidity of the class system," writes Schmidgall, "is his target in the magnificently stiff Lady Bracknell." Come off it: Lady Bracknell is not stiff at all, she is gloriously entertaining. She is no more an attack on the class system than is Bertie Wooster. We are on her side, we revel in her haughtiness; when she rounds upon Miss Prism, we endure no pang for her victim. Schmidgall is too keen to look for the acid. When Lord Illingworth in *A Woman of No Importance* remarks that "the essential thing for a necktie is style. A well-tied tie is the first serious step in life," Schmidgall comments that this is an example of Wilde getting away with "the most outrageous obiter dicta." But this could be pure Jeeves. ("Do ties matter at a time like this, Jeeves?" "There is no time, sir, at which ties do not matter.") If Wodehouse had done a couple of years in the slammer, people might be writing up his oeuvre as a savage indictment of aristocratic decadence.

Some people, Schmidgall among them, have wanted to make high claims for Wilde's work as a whole. The loftiest claim of all was made by Wilde himself, in *De Profundis*:

> I altered the minds of men and the colors of things; there was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder; I took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet, at the same time that I widened its range and enriched its characterization: drama, novel, poem in rhyme, poem in prose, subtle or fantastic dialogue, whatever I touched I made beautiful in a new mode of beauty....

Poor Oscar, it is a large overestimate.

Wilde's place among the immortals is secure, but it rests upon surprisingly little. One of his great achievements was as a wit, a conversationalist, a personality. Much of this, alas, is lost forever. "The best of his writing is but a pale reflection of his brilliant conversations," said Gide. Robert Ross, supposedly the first man to seduce him, and later his most loyal friend in adversity, remarked, "You could not tell ... what fantastic architecture was silhouetted against the purple atmosphere of his conversation." Max Beerbohm tried to convey the flavor in one of his essays: Wilde, he explained, did not speak at all as he wrote. Instead of the neatly placed epigrams that we find in the plays, his talk was whimsical, extravagant, fantastical, improvisatory. And it was apparently not selfish: he responded rapidly to what others said, drew them into the conversation, made them feel that they were unusually brilliant themselves.

These delights are irrecoverable. We are left with his writings; and truth to tell, most of them have not stood the test of time too well. The verse, except for *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, is thin stuff, and derivative. "Swinburne and water," said a critic of the time, but sometimes he was Keats and water:

> Never I ween did lover hold such tryst,
> For all night long he murmured honeyed word,

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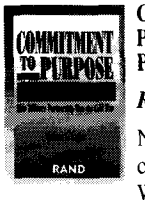

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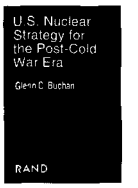

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And saw her sweet unravished limbs, and kissed
Her pale and argent body undisturbed...

—and sometimes Matthew Arnold and water:

O singer of Persephone!
In the dim meadows desolate
Dost thou remember Sicily?

The fairy stories have a faint anemic charm, but they are spoiled by a surprisingly leaden preachiness; they are too sentimental to sparkle like Perrault, too *voulu* to speak to the child's subconscious like the tales of the brothers Grimm. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* goes off at half cock. Unlike Huysmans's *À Rebours*, by which it was much influenced, it does not convey a true sense of decadence, and unlike Aubrey Beardsley, Wilde has no lively sense of evil. The people in *Dorian Gray* seem to be playing at being bad; and whereas in *The Importance of Being Earnest* our feeling that the characters do not mean what they say is part of the charm, in the novel it produces flatness. Stevenson is far more sinister in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and at half the length.

The essays and the dialogues are hothouse blooms of the '90s, now looking rather overblown and faded. By far the most elaborate of these is *The Critic as Artist*, a study of the nature of art in the form of a dialogue between two exquisite young men. It is amusing and acute, with genuinely probing and provocative ideas embedded in it; but it is vitiated by some preposterously purple prose. On Oxford:

> One can loiter in the gray cloisters at Magdalen, and listen to some flutelike voice singing in Waynfleete's chapel, or lie in the green meadow, among the strange snakespotted fritillaries, and watch the sunburnt noon smite to a finer gold the tower's gilded vanes....

On Homer:

> Behind the embroidered curtains of his pavilion sits Achilles, in perfumed raiment, while in harness of gilt and silver the friend of his soul arrays himself to go forth to the fight. From a curiously carven chest that his mother Thetis had brought to his shipside, the Lord of the Myrmidons takes out that mystic chalice that the lip of man had never touched....

One would like to think that this sort of thing was a send-up of bejeweled aesthetic prose (and it is fair to say that one of the enticements of this style, and one of its dangers, was its vague hover between the serious and the flippant). But when one thinks of *Salomé* or the self-congratulation of *De Profundis*, one must fear that at least half of him thought he was being impressive.

What, then, of Wilde's plays? *The Importance of Being Earnest* is imperishable, but the rest wilt under scrutiny. His first play, *Vera*, is a farrago of nonsense about a tsar who falls madly in love with an anarchist. His second play, *The Duchess of Padua*, is a dull verse drama in sub-Shakespearian vein. The absurdities of *Salomé* are perversely redeemed by its massive insincerity, which even the dazzling artifices of Strauss's operatic setting cannot quite conceal. That leaves the three dramas of modern life, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance* and *An Ideal Husband*. These get revived from time to time, they hold the stage reasonably well, they contain some excellent jokes; but in the last analysis they are not very good plays. At heart they are conventionally Victorian drawing-room comedies with an overlay of melodrama. The plots are sentimental, the psychology false. "Dead, and never called me mother"—that much-mocked line is from the stage version of Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne*, but it is the chief plot mechanism, more or less, of *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

Schmidgall writes entertainingly and with spirit, though his relentless perkiness occasionally lapses into vulgarity. He makes mistakes. Unlike Bertie Wooster, he is particularly unsound on scripture knowledge; he gets into a terrible muddle about Balaam's ass, and for some reason he thinks that a poem by John Gray about St. Peter is autobiographical. He is prone to think that any time his hero uses the word "wild," he is making a pun. But he is alert, stimulating and quite often perceptive. Perhaps he underestimates the gaiety that is at the core of Wilde's best work. In his last, impecunious years Wilde was offered commissions for new plays, but he refused them, because he could never again recapture the lightness of heart that had been among his essential gifts. After his release from prison, he wrote nothing more.

RICHARD JENKYNS is the author most recently of *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance* (Harvard University Press).

Beauty and the Beast

BY ARTHUR C. DANTO

Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age by Luc Ferry translated by Robert De Loaiza

(University of Chicago Press, 280 pp., $32)

Not long ago I sat through one of Eric Rohmer's pallid late films, in which attractive men and women conduct indecisive flirtations over dinner tables in handsome apartments in Paris or at charming weekend retreats. The central female character was a philosophy teacher in a lycée, who is introduced by a student she meets at a dull party to the student's father, a good-looking widower. The student, a young woman of almost monumental self-assurance and vulnerability, seeks to throw her new friend together with the father, chiefly, one feels, to spite the father's girlfriend, whom she loathes. The girlfriend, an attractive and self-possessed businesswoman, is pursuing an advanced degree in philosophy. And at a *diner à trois*, the two women vie for the man's admiration by engaging in what one might call a philosophy match—seeking to trap one another in lapses or confessions of ignorance regarding some obscure passage in Husserl or Kant. Only in France is phenomenology thought to be the way to a man's heart.

A good many of France's major philosophers—Sartre and Beauvoir come to mind—began their careers as lycée teachers in the *classe terminale*, where students spend a year in the study of philosophy before sitting for the baccalaureate exams. To be a middle-class person in France, in other words, is to be philosophically literate in a way that is unthinkable in the United States, where philosophy is but a liberal arts elective. Philosophers in the United States write mainly for one another, and it is rare that a thinker of even great philosophical renown is recognized by name outside the narrow circle of pro-

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fessional philosophy. But Rohmer's *femmes savantes* are part of a natural audience for France's philosophers, who may write for one another on occasion, but typically address readers who deem themselves competent to follow arguments and to catch allusions to texts in the history of philosophy. (In 1967 Michel Foucault's *Les mots et les choses*, unaccountably translated here as *The Order of Things*, was a best-seller in France.)

The professionalization of American philosophy is almost certainly the consequence of the infusion into our philosophy departments of German thinkers who fled Europe in World War II, bringing with them the austere teachings of logical positivism and especially the discipline of mathematical logic. The positivists cheerfully dismissed pretty much the whole of traditional philosophy as nonsense, and sought to transform whatever remained into something approximating an exact science. The first generation of American philosophers trained under these auspices became, even in subjects as seemingly inhospitable to logical analysis as aesthetics, logical analysts of one or another degree of technicality. This meant that their writings were perceived as inaccessible and formidable. In recent years perhaps the only academic philosopher who has been able to reach readers outside those who follow the professional journals has been Richard Rorty; a writer such as Richard Schusterman, whose *Pragmatist Aesthetics* became a wild success in France and elsewhere in Europe, not least because of his celebration of hip-hop culture, has made little impact at home.

Luc Ferry's book presupposes an audience composed of the kinds of readers portrayed in Rohmer's films. It is scholarly, argumentative and demanding, but it is not the kind of book that American philosophers write for one another. The question that it takes up, while it is certainly not without interest to readers in this country and possibly pertinent to our ultimate concerns, has a meaning almost peculiar to the French intellectual: namely, what are intellectuals to be now that they are no longer Marxists?

Being a Marxist, or being at least sympathetic with the overall goals of Marxism, whatever one might have come to think of the Soviet Union, was a posture almost reflexively assumed by thinkers in France. It constituted part of what the novelist Marcel Ayme once described as *le confort intellectuel*; and when it stopped being that, the public thinkers of France began to cast about for something to replace it. (A few years ago I was invited to participate in a conference in Paris ingeniously titled *La découverte philosophique de l'Amérique*, The Philosophical Discovery of America, and the animating idea of the conference, almost unthinkable even a few years earlier, was that something of value might be learned from the political institutions, attitudes and practices of the United States.)

Ferry himself was a founding member of a group of brash young thinkers in Paris, the so-called New Philosophers, who made news by breaking ranks with the left and actually taking a stand against Marxism in the 1970s, on the grounds that it leads to Stalinism. He is essentially a political theorist. In this book he undertakes to advance a certain form of individualism, which he derives in a way from Nietzsche, but more generally from the history of aesthetics that led up to Nietzsche. It is a form of individualism that he discovers in postmodern attitudes toward art.

Here is what I take to be Ferry's overall conclusion. Nietzsche's thoughts, he writes, are "more modern than modernity itself, because they prepare a future that sees itself as unprecedented." This is a future in which the status of the thinker—that is, the intellectual—"should go from that of worker to that of artist." Hence *homo aestheticus*, the human as aesthetic being. And hence the agenda of Ferry's book: a "search for a new figuration of individualism." The latter should

> find its most complete expression in art, taken in its most general sense as the most adequate manifestation of the will to power ... because, in a world that is now wholly perspectival, in a world once again become infinite in that it offers the possibility of an infinity of interpretations, only art presents itself authentically as what it is: an evaluation that makes no pretense of truth.

Nietzsche proclaimed that there are no facts, only interpretations. In some ways Ferry sees this as the very essence of postmodernism, where there are no aesthetic constraints because no form of art is "more true" than any other:

> The most characteristic trait of the culture we bathe in today is without a doubt eclecticism. In principle everything can cohabit within it, or, if one prefers putting it in a way that conforms even more to the spirit of the times, nothing in the culture is a priori illegitimate.

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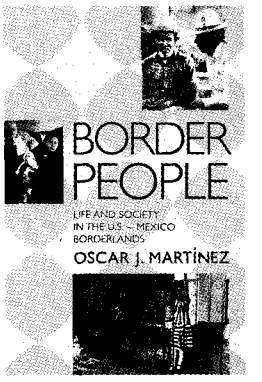

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artistic practice today. Art in the postmodern era shows the way to political salvation.

Ferry begins his investigation by accepting the slogan "the death of man," a swift and dramatic way of expressing the proposition that we human beings are no longer "masters and possessors of ourselves." We are not such masters and such possessors, he supposes, because our mental lives are split between conscious and unconscious states, the former being in large measure determined by the latter, over which we have no control, and concerning which we would not even have knowledge had it not been for the discoveries of psychoanalysis. The kind of rationality presupposed in human beings being free, in the sense of having "the capacity to give oneself one's own laws," is accordingly invalidated. But it is invalidated at the very moment (Ferry considers this a paradox) when self-determination and autonomy are political ideals vehemently insisted upon across the face of the world. And so he wonders to what degree it is possible, if it is possible at all, to accept the political values of democratic individualism and at the same time to accept the truth that the philosophical presuppositions of those values have forever been falsified "by the discovery of the various aspects of the unconscious."

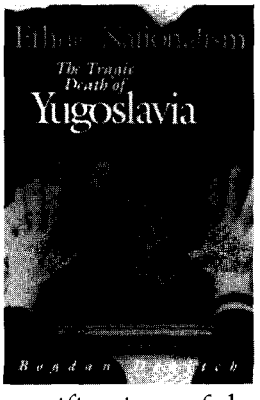
It is his thought—and it is this that gives his book its considerable novelty—that a good place to treat this problem is aesthetics. For aesthetics is "the field par excellence in which the problem brought about by the subjectivization of the world characteristic of modern times can be observed in the chemically pure state." Aesthetics serves this purpose because it has, from the first, taken as authoritative the tastes of the individual subject, regarding which "there can be no dispute." Whether something is or is not aesthetically good, or beautiful, is not an objective matter to be settled by precise measurement or external authority. By contrast with science, religion, history and law, aesthetics as a discipline begins with subjectivity, and works outward. "The history of modernity," Ferry argues, is really the history of the decline of traditions everywhere, leaving nothing but subjectivity to deal with issues that used to be arbitrated by those traditions. Thus aesthetics, which has always accepted precisely such a condition in matters of taste, may have something to teach us in confronting so chaotic a situation. One of the attractive features of Ferry's book is that he narrates the history of modern aesthetics from this perspective.

And indeed, in at least its great originating texts of the eighteenth century, in Hume and in Kant, aesthetics really does endeavor to deal with the issue that Ferry proposes as the political paradox of our time, though neither Hume nor Kant perceived subjectivity and rationality to be quite as opposed as Ferry imagines them to be. Hume appears to find in matters of taste the possibility of an agreement between subjects one hardly would have anticipated in so skeptical a thinker. "The great variety of Taste, as well as of opinion, which prevails in the world, is too obvious not to have fallen under everyone's observation," Hume wrote in his canonical essay, "Of the Standard of Taste," in 1757. His view precisely was that "beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them."

But Hume's originality lay in insisting, first, that this radical subjectivity does not entail that every judgment of taste has equal validity and, second, that there is a singular consensus on what is good and what is not, so that taste is finally not that different from person to person, even if it is not underwritten by objective reality. "Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between Ogilby and Milton, or Bunyan and Addison," Hume wrote in a famous sentence, "would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a molehill to be as high as Teneriffe, or a pond as extensive as the ocean." Some account must be given, Hume evidently believed, of why judgments of taste so often concur if everything is merely subjective. And surely the reason is that subjects are not all that different from one another.

It might be pointed out, with Ferry's problem in mind, that causality, too, is no quality of things themselves, according to Hume, but also exists in the mind that contemplates them. Causal relations are spontaneously ascribed on the basis of habitual association, and we have no greater power over habitual association than we are alleged to have over our unconscious drives and hungers. Hume could certainly be cited in support of "the death of man": it was he, after all, who asserted that reason is (and ought to be!) the slave of passion. And yet people generally come up with the same causal picture of things, and view the world in basically similar ways. So far as the global clamor for autonomy is concerned, people pretty much want the same kinds of things (consider, in the realm of taste, the stupendous

If your neighbor cannot sleep. . .



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popularity of American popular culture the world around) and are against the same kinds of things. So in fact the "death of man" might be perfectly compatible with demands for autonomy, without any special need to reconcile them through aesthetics. Hume's philosophy of mind is of a piece, whether he was thinking of art or science.

Kant's aesthetic theory is too intricate in its own right, and too implicated with the rest of his system, to take up in a review. Suffice it to say that Kant's aesthetics resembled Hume's in this respect: taste belonged to the same mental architecture as causality, space and time. Kant, too, began with *de gustibus non disputandum est*: judgments of taste can no more be demonstrated than beauty (in Hume's philosophy) can be pointed to in things. Still, Kant argued that one cannot judge something beautiful without tacitly universalizing that judgment. To find something beautiful is to believe that all rational beings must find it beautiful. In this respect Kant's aesthetics and his moral philosophy are nearly of a piece, for a nonuniversalizable moral judgment is ipso facto invalid.

A person who believed in the "death of man" might single out Kant for criticism, since he treated human beings very largely as rational beings, whereas the trend today is to insist that there is more to the self than its rationality, that we are inflected by gender, race, traditions, cultural and historical location and so on. In fact, Kant took some notice of the South Sea Islanders, arguing that we could not rationally will the life that they led, which was a life of pure sensual pleasure. But the thinkers of the eighteenth century were only beginning to awaken to anthropological difference (Cook's *Voyages* had recently been published), and it is difficult to know how Kant would have responded to multiculturalist criticisms, or whether he would have persisted in his thesis that judgments of taste would be universalized across cultural lines.

Dissolve to Nietzsche. Nietzschean individualism does not lend itself to universalization or harmonization. "More modern than modernity itself," it anticipates the eclecticism of the "postmodern moment" because of the kind of radical incommensurability that Nietzsche found between individual and individual, each interpreting the world in its own way, and none of the interpretations true, because there are no facts. And this, with some qualifications that are not worked out in this book, is Ferry's view as well. Of course, since no interpretation is true, none can

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be in any logical sense incompatible with any other.

So maybe we could achieve a certain harmony if we could get everyone to accept that what divides them from one another has nothing to do with truth. But try telling Jews and Muslims in the Middle East that what divides them (or large numbers of them) is merely interpretation, with truth and falsity of no relevance whatever, and you will all at once give them a common target, namely you. It is precisely their claims to truth that have so far brought them to bitter strife. For the faithful, it would be no consolation for the loss of truth to be assured that their systems of belief are like works of art, that Jews and Muslims alike are but *homines aestheticus.*

After her elective course in philosophy, the American undergraduate—let us call her Eveline—will know that exhibiting her knowledge of Husserl will not earn her many points in the pursuit of love, not even on the Upper West Side. But she will know a thing or two about belief and truth: that to believe that *p* is to believe that *p* is true. And she will probably have discussed Donald Davidson's Principle of Charity, according to which a condition for understanding the utterances of another is to credit him with pretty much the same beliefs as her own—so that, contrary to Ferry, modern philosophy does not cut "the shared world" out from under us.

Eveline will certainly be skeptical of "the death of man," for her professor will have taught her to take psychoanalysis with a grain or more of salt. True, Eveline has learned that folk psychology in general is under heavy fire, and that perhaps the entire language of will, motive, intention and even belief may one day be replaced with an advanced neurochemical idiom. But for the life of her she cannot see what this has to do with political autonomy. Whatever the explanation of what we speak of as our wants, autonomy consists in not being prevented by our institutions from realizing them. What, she wonders, would the Kurds or the Bosnians or the rebels in Chiapas say to the proposition that, since man is dead, there is something paradoxical in demanding autonomy?

One of the things that *la découverte philosophique de l'Amérique* might turn up is how differently philosophy is done here than in Paris. And it is an important part of the difference that American philosophy still believes in truth, dividing only in how truth is to be analyzed. Does this suggest that there is no shared world to speak of between the two philosophical cultures? This might be true, without the explanation being that philosophy is only interpretation that makes "no pretense of truth." And it may be granted that there is no pretense to truth in art; the absence of such a pretense is what underwrites the possibility of a pluralistic art world. But no pretense to truth in a book into which so much scholarship and so much analysis have gone? The author can say this, but he cannot really believe it.

As a sometime aesthetician in a philosophical world where aesthetics is marginalized, I would dearly love to see a heroic role assigned to the discipline. But not at the price of giving up all pretense to truth! I cannot imagine doing philosophy and then saying that the question of truth doesn't arise. Neither, I bet, could Nietzsche. And neither, I am certain, can Ferry. Philosophical differences can be explained by saying that no one *yet* knows the truth. To give up the pursuit of truth, however, is to give up philosophy—or, what comes to a version of that, to turn philosophy into art.

ARTHUR C. DANTO is the art critic for *The Nation* and the author most recently of *Embodied Meanings: Critical Essays and Aesthetic Meditations* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

The Twit

BY WENDY LESSER

Roald Dahl: A Biography by Jeremy Treglown

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 322 pp., $25)

The good thing—or rather, one of the many good things, but probably at the root of all the good things—about Jeremy Treglown's biography of Roald Dahl is that it is unauthorized. The family did not want him to write it, and only one or two of them eventually, reluctantly, cooperated in his research. For a biographer, this has some disadvantages: he cannot quote at length from the published writings, cannot have access to many of the most potentially informative letters, cannot interview those who were closest to the man (as opposed to the writer). But all of these disadvantages are outweighed by the biographer's freedom to choose and to express his own attitude toward his subject. In the case of Dahl this freedom is crucial, because he was, as both a writer and a man, so complicatedly irritating, so complexly appealing, that his biographer requires the full range of emotions from which to select an appropriate response. Jeremy Treglown has made the selection with consummate, admirable grace.

This tonal delicacy becomes apparent early in the first chapter, where Treglown explains how he went about attempting to answer his own questions about this world-famous author of children's books, this man who was "a war hero, a connoisseur, a philanthropist, a devoted family man" and also "a fantasist, an anti-Semite, a bully and a self-publicizing troublemaker." With the unerring sense of rhythmic and moral balance that comes to seem typical of him over the subsequent 300 pages, Treglown comments about Dahl's contradictory character: "Many people loved him and have reason to be grateful to him; many—some of them the same people—frankly detested him."

If you have read Dahl's autobiographies, *Boy* and *Going Solo,* as well as his own self-promoting jacket copy, you already have a general if factually flawed sense of the life. He was indeed born in Wales of Norwegian ancestry, went to Repton (a less-than-first-rate British public school), was employed for a while by Shell Oil, flew with the RAF in the Second World War, worked as a British attaché in Washington. If you are a movie-magazine fan, you know more: he was married to the actress Patricia Neal, had five children with her (including one who died of measles and one who suffered permanent brain damage in a traffic accident), and nursed her through a terrible stroke and a long recovery; then he divorced her and, toward the end of his life, married his longtime mistress, Felicity Crosland. And if you are a parent, a schoolteacher or a child, you may know still more, for in that case you are likely to be familiar with Dahl's novels, from *James and the Giant Peach, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Twits* to *The Witches, Matilda, The BFG* and about ten others.

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But what you don't know, probably, is how often and how concertedly Dahl lied about himself. He claimed to have invented the creatures called Gremlins, when they were really a widespread element of British fighter-pilot folk mythology during the 1930s and 1940s. He claimed that a schoolmaster who later became the archbishop of Canterbury had administered a severe beating to a Repton friend, when that particular master was not even at Repton at the time of the beating. He claimed to be a put-upon, solitary-genius author, hampered by the greedy demands of commercial publishers, when in fact his last three or four books were heavily and helpfully shaped by Stephen Roxburgh, his editor at Farrar, Straus & Giroux. He claimed . . . but I refer you to Treglown, whose tone is far less screechy than mine, and who repeatedly sets the record straight in scrupulous, evenhanded and largely unfinger-pointing fashion.

What Treglown seems to understand, with a restraint that is rare in these adversarial days, is how much the bad behavior must have fed the good books. Though adults persist in liking them and in giving them to their progeny, Dahl's books for children are truly, unnervingly rebellious. They are all about the child's escape from the miseries of family life, the successful vanquishing of parental morality, the inherent fun in being silly or outrageous or sometimes downright obnoxious. In a way, they are like the Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle books without the heavy moral overlay: a catalog of all the bad things that children can get up to.

It's interesting to compare Dahl's work to that of Maurice Sendak, another brilliant children's writer who is willing to venture into dark terrain. Like Dahl, Sendak is not afraid to scare his miniature fans; he readily introduces misbehavior, danger and even death into his gloriously illustrated works of fiction. But in Sendak's books, from *In the Night Kitchen* through the retelling of Grimm's *Dear Mili* to the recent *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy*, the satisfying close of the book always involves a return to familial warmth and protection (even if, as in *Dear Mili*, the return takes place through death; even if, as in Sendak's latest, the family is a cobbled-together tribe of street tramps).

Sendak, in this respect, resembles Randall Jarrell's description of Kipling: a writer who tends to invent stories "about a boy who is abandoned in a little room, grimy, with spiders in every corner, and after a while the spiders come a little nearer, and a little nearer, and one of them is Father Spider, and one of them

THOMAS EAKINS

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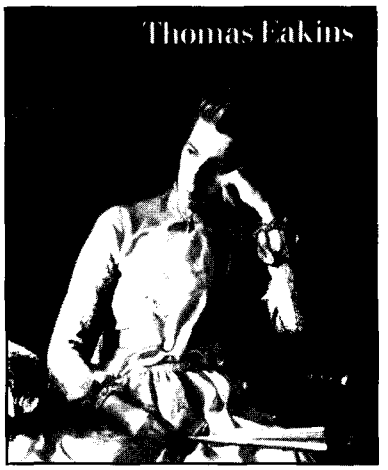

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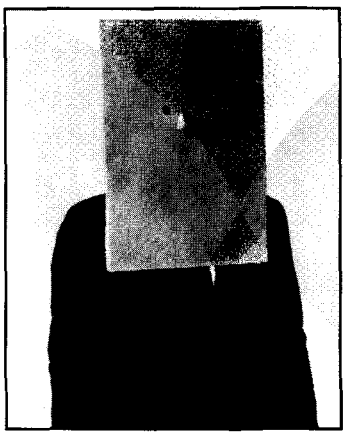

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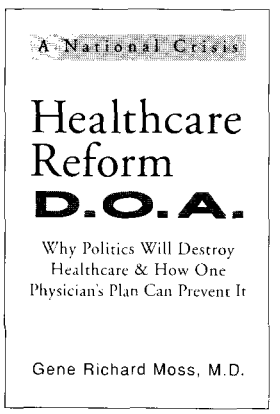
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is Mother Spider, and the boy is their Baby Spider." In Dahl, on the other hand, the little boy would be rescued from the horrible room (where he had been incarcerated by his cruel or merely careless parents) by the arrival of a deus ex machina millionaire magician, preferably capable of flying. Dahl's and Sendak's version are both fantasies that get at the dark side of truth, but they envision that truth in totally different ways. It is their job, at any rate, to make up the truth, and carping about such a writer's lack of verisimilitude will only make one seem idiotically literal-minded.

Which is exactly how Dahl's critics often seem. Choosing this particular subject for a biography has given Treglown the opportunity (or the noxious obligation) to enter into the culture wars at their most primal: the public argument about suitable reading for children. Treglown manages to keep himself above the dirty fray even as he gets in a few good licks. He astutely points out that, in England as well as America,

> literary criticism was turning at the time into a kind of secular Inquisition bent on rooting out heresy. From a historical perspective, there was something depressingly circular about a response to *The Witches* published in the *Times Educational Supplement*, where the feminist cultural commentator Catherine Itzin compared the book with fifteenth-century witch-hunting tracts, without noticing that she was talking like something of a witch-hunter herself.

This broadness of vision does not mean, however, that Treglown lets Dahl off too easily. When the dirty linen fits, he makes him wear it. In response to one of Dahl's typically anti-Semitic epistolary remarks, for instance, Treglown comments:

> The letter was a private amusement between friends and arguably belongs to that realm of friendship which Martin Amis, with Philip Larkin in mind, has temptingly called "the willing suspension of accountability." But whether or not consenting adults should be held answerable for their private jokes, something is revealed in them, and there is no question that while Dahl had several Jewish friends, his anti-Semitic jokes were of a piece with an underlying dislike of Jews, considered generally, and of Zionists in particular.

Treglown's careful coverage of Dahl's attitude toward Jews reveals what may well have been the most unmitigatedly ugly side of his character. The subject of standard English anti-Semitism deserves a full essay in itself, and luckily Orwell wrote one. In "Anti-Semitism in Britain," published in 1945, Orwell commented that "it is generally admitted that anti-Semitism is on the increase, that it has been greatly exacerbated by the war and that humane and enlightened people are not immune to it." On the other hand, he pointed out, even "though anti-Semitism is sufficiently in evidence now, it is probably *less* prevalent in England than it was thirty years ago," when "a Jewish boy at a public school almost invariably had a bad time. He could, of course, live down his Jewishness if he was exceptionally charming or athletic, but it was an initial disability comparable to a stammer or a birthmark." But the problem didn't begin, or end, there. "There has been a perceptible anti-Semitic strain in English literature from Chaucer onwards," Orwell continued, "and without even getting up from this table to consult a book I can think of passages which *if written now* would be stigmatized as anti-Semitism, in the work of Shakespeare, Smollett, Thackeray, Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley and various others."

Such passages, perhaps surprisingly, are nowhere to be found in the fictional works of Dahl. But his private and eventually his public pronouncements about Jews grew more explicit and more virulent as his sympathies became (in what he may have imagined to be a T. E. Lawrence-like manner) increasingly pro-Arab. By the 1980s he was identifying all Jews with Israelis, and in 1983 he went so far as to say to a journalist that "there is a trait in the Jewish character that does provoke animosity.... I mean there's always a reason why anti-anything crops up anywhere; even a stinker like Hitler didn't just pick on them for no reason."

Such remarks are unforgivable, and Treglown does not ask us to forgive. What he does ask us to do is to separate as much as possible our responses to the hateful man and the beloved author. He offers us, as moral exemplars, the schoolchildren in a San Francisco classroom who wrote to Dahl in 1990. "Dear

The Borrowed Bow

The moment stings, shorting like an old wireless
of bakelite body with a trellised raffia screen.
The shadowy corner's acrid with electricity,
blue air frazzed with black
in a cliffside house blank-windowed towards France.
But around the space of shock are other rooms
where old men, sitting by their wirelesses,
wear country check worsteds with a fleck of red
blodged with gravy. This moment
is a vanishing point on a post-war seacoast,
the pier blown up in case of German invasion.

The rooms still have that slow life
moving in them, a termite-gnawed Ashanti mask
on the walls of a retired colonial official,
an assegai from elsewhere in Africa,
a boot-polish shield, a bow, a poisoned arrow;
for there's an unexplored magic in all time,
a survival even now of a toothless mouth
sopping at a biscuit, a hand, trembling
on a bony knee, about to reach
for porcelain on a frame of swiveling trays,
thin finger crooked as for a trigger.

I borrowed the bow of black hardwood,
took it and a bamboo stick into the garden.
Couldn't pull the leather string back;
the magic of the bow-spar wouldn't bend for me.
I knew I was just meddling. So I went indoors
to fiddle with the wireless innards:
electronic emotions and jerky excitements
in the village of valves, which cracked like gunfire,
a tracer arc streaked across dusty connections,
as if before the snap of it, the coil of smoke,
a tiny bow had shot a brilliant arrow.

DOUGLAS OLIVER

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Mr. Dahl," one such letter went:

> We love your books, but we have a problem ... we are Jews!! We love your books but you don't like us because we are Jews. That offends us. Can you please change your mind about what you said about Jews! ...
>
> Love,
> Aliza & Tamar

As Treglown clearly understands, these children have mastered a rhetorical equipoise that their proverbial Elders-and-Betters have yet to achieve. The "love" is still in the present tense, the "problem" and the "offense" winningly personalized. The writer has committed a moral error—for which he is being generously invited to apologize—but the books are entirely absolved. It is not that these children consider Dahl's hurtful statements to be "only words" (as Catharine MacKinnon, one of the most strident of the Es-and-Bs, would have it), but that they can evidently discern the difference between the words of art and the words of personal remark, as shockingly few school boards, children's librarians, book critics and legislators can.

Treglown is one of the few who can tell the difference, and he writes well about Dahl's fiction. I would perhaps disagree with some of his evaluations: I think he overrates *The BFG*, and gives short shrift to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by devoting excessive attention to the racial characteristics of the Oompa-Loompas. Treglown seems uncomfortable with their African-pygmy origins; yet he doesn't shy from the "reddish-brown skin," "flat" nose and "lips that were like two giant frankfurters" on the people-eating giants in *The BFG*. (I don't ask him to shy, only to compare fairly.) He also praises *The BFG* for the eponymous giant's odd language, which is derived, he convincingly argues, from Patricia Neal's aphasic utterances. But whereas a stroke victim's strange speech can indeed sound poetic in the right context—think, for instance, of Arthur Kopit's *Wings*—the garbled words Dahl flings about ("In this sloshflunking Giant Country, happy eats like pineapples and pigwinkles is simply not growing") come across as merely twee. To my ear, the Big Friendly Giant sounds like a mixture between the worst excesses of Butterfly McQueen ("Just because I is a giant, you think I is a mangobbling cannybull!") and a slackly colloquial Gertrude Stein ("Giants is never dying.... Sometimes and quite suddenly, a giant is disappearing and nobody is ever knowing where he goes to"). And, speaking of Stein, the best thing about *The BFG*—the announcement at the end that the giant has written a book and put someone else's name on it, and "you've just finished reading it"—is a straight rip-off from the last paragraph of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.

I asked my informant from the juvenile generation which books by Dahl he liked best, and he named *Matilda* and *The Witches*. My own favorites are *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *James and the Giant Peach*, but I may have an excessive fondness for the two I happened to read aloud to the informant during his earlier days. He has asked me if he can read Treglown's book when I am finished using it for this review, and the request gives me pause. I worry about letting an 8-year-old find out all these hard truths about his hero, just as I worry about how many heroic lies he will again be exposed to when he rereads *Going Solo* for the third or fourth time. But then I tell myself to calm down. I should learn something from Dahl's most intelligent readers, the children who know that forming your own opinions, in the face of whatever crazy things the grown-ups say, is the most exciting rebellion of all.

WENDY LESSER is the editor of *The Threepenny Review* and the author most recently of *Pictures at an Execution* (Harvard University Press).

TRB *continued from page 6*

of the volunteer expeditionary force idea is that every soldier would have volunteered for this particular mission.

To appeal to conservatives, you could call this a "market-oriented" approach to the problem of intervention. For any use of force to occur, it would have to attract enough "customers" willing to "pay" for it by putting their own lives on the line.

I suspect that in most cases it would not be difficult to find recruits. There are two obvious sources. One is true believers in this or that particular cause, such as the Americans who fought in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War. The other is people who simply long for adventure, enjoy the thought of military derring-do and don't mind risking their lives in search of it. There is nothing ignoble or irrational about this. Many occupations carry risks that their practitioners think are worth taking. The struggle for a meaningful life takes us all down strange byways, as the First Lady has noted.

Indeed, as you start thinking about this notion, you find yourself reinventing the wheel of the all-volunteer standing army itself. Why not, for example, a permanent, volunteer expeditionary force explicitly committed to being available for service in humanitarian interventions where American national interest may be involved but is not necessarily paramount? Yet how different is that from the various commando units we have now? Do these courageous soldiers really hope to sit out their entire careers, never using the skills they've developed, unless there's a frontal attack on the United States itself? Somehow I doubt it.

Writing in *The New York Review of Books* last summer, the veteran United Nations official Brian Urquhart proposed a variation on the expeditionary force idea: an all-volunteer peacekeeping force under the direct command of the United Nations. This would solve the problem many have with the idea of American soldiers taking commands from foreign officers.

Whether under international or national command, though, the principle is the same. Let the soldiers themselves decide whether the cause they are fighting for is worth risking their own blood. Of course that still doesn't make war a completely voluntary affair, since it involves killing as well as dying. Even volunteer soldiers will be killing people who haven't necessarily volunteered for the honor. Some national (or international) leader will still have to decide that a particular cause is worth the deaths of foreigners. But that, perhaps sadly, is an easier decision.

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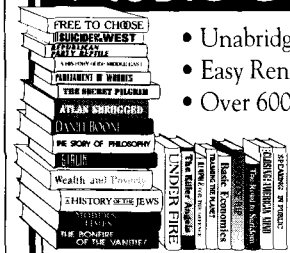

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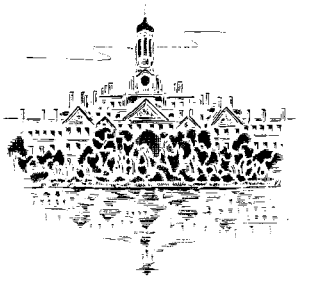
CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Cut and run

ON FRIDAY, PRESIDENT CLINTON asserted that "we are determined to save innocent lives and to raise the price for aggression" in Bosnia. His words were clear: NATO would bomb Serbian military positions if the Serbs did not meet certain specified conditions in Gorazde, which they didn't. Still, late that same night, someone called Yasushi Akashi told the president to forget it. Akashi is the U.N. special envoy in the war zone. It is he who chooses between life or death for the Muslims of the area, and once again he chose death. Of course, in the twenty-four hours of grace Akashi gave the invaders, not all that many more dead were added to the 700 already killed in the three-week long Serbian siege. But just for good measure, as the Serbians finally began their sullen tactical retreat, they torched whole neighborhoods and blew up Gorazde's water-treatment plant. Médecins Sans Frontières, a scrupulously honorable rescue operation, had long since demanded Akashi's resignation. He couldn't be trusted, it said, since he was always fronting for Radovan Karadzic. His last such act was actually to forbid NATO action against the Serbs. Embarrassing to Clinton? Not at all. Not even inconvenient. The administration has been trying for more than a year to do nothing but talk tough about Bosnia, and the idea of multilateralism has been its excuse for doing just that and no more. Clinton says we can't lift the arms embargo against Bosnia without permission from the U.N. and from our allies. This makes us hostage to everybody, even nobodies. This past weekend the United States was held hostage to U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's vacation plans, on schedule no matter what. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, we're told, tried to reach Boutros-Ghali about Serbian disregard of the NATO ultimatum. But, according to *The New York Times*, "Boutros-Ghali could not be reached because he was en route to Barbados." George Bush used multilateralism as a cover for American power, and in my view he used it needlessly. But Clinton uses multilateralism as a cover for his own cool comfort with American powerlessness, and that is a different matter.

MULTILATERALISM, IT TURNS OUT, is also the chosen cover for the general powerlessness of decency in world affairs. Here, captured in an all-too-accurate headline in *The Boston Globe*, is the quintessential soul of the United Nations: "U.N. SEES NO RWANDA TRUCE, CUTS FORCE." And runs. To be sure, the whites in the country were rescued quickly by Western troops. At a lunch for Jean-Bertrand Aristide at Harvard some weeks ago, I suggested that this was exactly what would happen in Rwanda, and my observation was met, I have to admit, with derision. But I have long been convinced that the unthinkable is by now altogether routine. What was unthinkable after Hitler was that world authority would stand aside while another genocide was perpetrated. But it is happening right now, and in more than one place. CNN is our witness. Ten thousand, 20,000 unoffending civilians may have been slaughtered in Rwanda by the time the U.N. withdrew, and its withdrawal was followed by still more killings. Yet it seemed to occur to no one that the situation required not less Blue Helmets but more, and with a warrant to fight for the defenseless. But, of course, the circumstances which we now require to permit soldiers to protect the unprotected is that these soldiers never be endangered themselves. By this logic we should do away with fire fighters since sometimes the fires they are battling also fell them.



WHY WERE WE TALKING ABOUT Rwanda in Aristide's presence? Perhaps as a comfort, because the situation in that grim place is even grimmer than in Haiti. Both of these countries have predominantly black populations, and, were they white, the powers would surely not permit the streets to be daily strewn with fresh corpses. It may at least explain why, though these two slaughters are on our television screens, they are off our radar screens. Still, our contempt for the torment visited on Bosnia shows that this administration is valiantly trying to be an equal opportunity neglecter. In the end, we'll turn our backs on all the afflicted, regardless of color. Or, to paraphrase Michael Walzer, having failed to rescue the Bosnians and the Tutsis, we must now fail to rescue the Haitians for the sake of moral consistency. Nonetheless, there is something especially macabre in our disdain for the dead and dying democrats of Haiti. A few hundred miles from Miami, the country has been in the American sphere of influence for a century. How strange it is that, only now, when decency might gain an edge in Haiti if it had our help, are we unconcerned about who rules in Port-au-Prince. Clinton himself is unconcerned about Haiti because he cares not a fig about the moral obligations of a great power. And in the Caribbean he hasn't even a multilateral artifice on which to fob off his indifference.

FRESH FROM HIS OTHER DIPLOmatic triumphs—all of the above, plus China—Warren Christopher is now in the Middle East brokering between Israel and Syria. Yitzhak Rabin has made it a simpler deal because he's offered up many of the riskiest concessions before the negotiations begin. Nonetheless, the chance of failure remains high. One reason is that the Arab populace seems to see peace as a respite before a future war. In the first issue of a lively scholarly journal, *Middle East Quarterly*, Hilal Khashan, associate professor of political science at the American University of Beirut, reports on an opinion survey he and his graduate students conducted among 1,000 Arab Muslims in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan about their attitudes toward peace with Israel. Asked whether they would support peace if future geostrategy worked against the Jewish state, 92 percent answered "no." All of Khashan's data should be desolating to the peace process enthusiasts, and he is a brave man to tell us about them. But, as a very dovish Israeli friend of mine said recently, "We no longer hope for peace; we want a divorce." Good luck.

JEWS ARE RATTLED WHENEVER anti-Semites command a big audience, and they've been especially rattled that Howard University has been providing a continuing audience for the likes of Khalid Abdul Muhammed. The bad news for Jews is that it's not just Howard where such events take place, and it's not just Muhammed who takes the pulpit. But that this should be taking place at Howard is particularly wrenching. It caps a process of souring in that place of learning that has gone on for the last quarter-century. Once, Howard was a truly great university—the scholarly equivalent of the Harlem renaissance—and it lasted longer. There, titans such as Alain Locke, Sterling Brown and E. Franklin Frazier did their work. If you don't know that work, it's your loss. It's also the loss of those Howard students—and Howard interlopers—who are more familiar with *The Secret Relationship of Blacks and Jews* than with the past glories of their own once glittering institution.

MARTIN PERETZ

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

A Major Accomplishment

When President Clinton signed Goals 2000: Educate America Act into law in early April, not many people noticed. Americans were understandably preoccupied with events in Bosnia, and the press was busy getting maximum mileage out of Whitewater. That's too bad because this is the most significant piece of education legislation we've ever had.

Goals 2000 sets up a framework for establishing high and clear national standards for what students should know and be able to do, assessments based on those standards and, eventually, consequences for achievement so that everyone will know that school counts. In other words, the law proposes an academically focused education system, like the successful systems in other industrialized nations. It also provides money and guidance to states that wish to set up their own voluntary standards and assessments and to districts to assist them in tooling up to help students meet the standards.

Goals 2000 provides a structure without which we can't begin to solve our education problems.

The Clinton administration conducted a heroic fight to prevent the legislation from being amended beyond recognition. For example, although high academic standards that apply to all students lead to greater equity, as we can see from systems in France, Germany and Japan, some groups maintained that such standards would be unfair to disadvantaged students. Their solution? Rewrite the legislation so academic standards would kick in only after all schools were given equal resources. These "opportunity-to-learn" standards would, in effect, have put off establishing academic standards for the foreseeable future. They would have hurt the youngsters they proposed to help by dooming them to continue with the same intellectual gruel they now get.

But the passage of Goals 2000 is the beginning of an effort, not the end. The legislation creates a process for mobilizing people concerned with education—officials at federal, state and local levels, teachers and other professional groups and parents. It gives them a framework for talking about what our students should know and be able to do and for creating standards and assessments that mirror their decisions. Whether Goals 2000 achieves its aims will depend on the quality of their efforts—and how successful they are at dealing with the many challenges they'll face.

Undoubtedly, there will be attempts by various groups either to take over the education standards or derail the process of reaching them. Imagine what a concerted effort by people who believe that victimization is the main theme of American history—or those who insist on "scientific" creationism in biology and geology—could do to the setting of standards in these fields.

The idea of "competency in challenging subject matter" is central to Goals 2000, but there will be attempts to introduce fuzzy standards instead of clear and rigorous ones. Indeed, much of what goes under the name of "outcomes-based education" (OBE) consists of vague statements masquerading as standards. A number of states that have already adopted OBE are evaluating student achievement with standards that give no clue as to what's expected—one state outcome asks students to "create products and make presentations that convey concepts and feelings."

Some groups will propose standards that are unrealistic—like the arts-education standards that recently appeared. It's true that the arts are sadly neglected in most schools these days, but it's ridiculous to create standards that call for youngsters graduating from high school to "compose music in several distinct styles" and "choreograph a duet demonstrating an understanding of choreographic principles, processes, and structures." Most youngsters don't have that kind of talent—or interest. A wish list is not a set of standards.

Or standards might be impossible because there is not enough time to achieve them. High school students take American history 45 minutes a day, 5 days a week, for a year—two at the most. Those setting standards have to make choices about what to include. But people don't like to make tough decisions, and the danger here is that they will throw in more than teachers can possibly teach, or youngsters absorb.

And when Goals 2000 does result in clear, high standards for our students and assessments reflecting these standards, it will probably face legal challenges based on the idea that some kids have not had an opportunity to learn.

Goals 2000, in and of itself, won't solve our education problems, but it provides a structure without which we can't begin to solve them. As mistakes are made—and they will be—we should realize that countries with successful education systems did not achieve excellence in a day. They worked for generations, and we, too, must be prepared to revise our ideas, perhaps many times. Now, at least, the framework is in place. We can get started and, if we are wise, make major progress.

Many people have talked about world-class standards, but President Clinton has crafted and passed a piece of legislation that can help us achieve them. Goals 2000 is a major accomplishment.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1994 by Albert Shanker.

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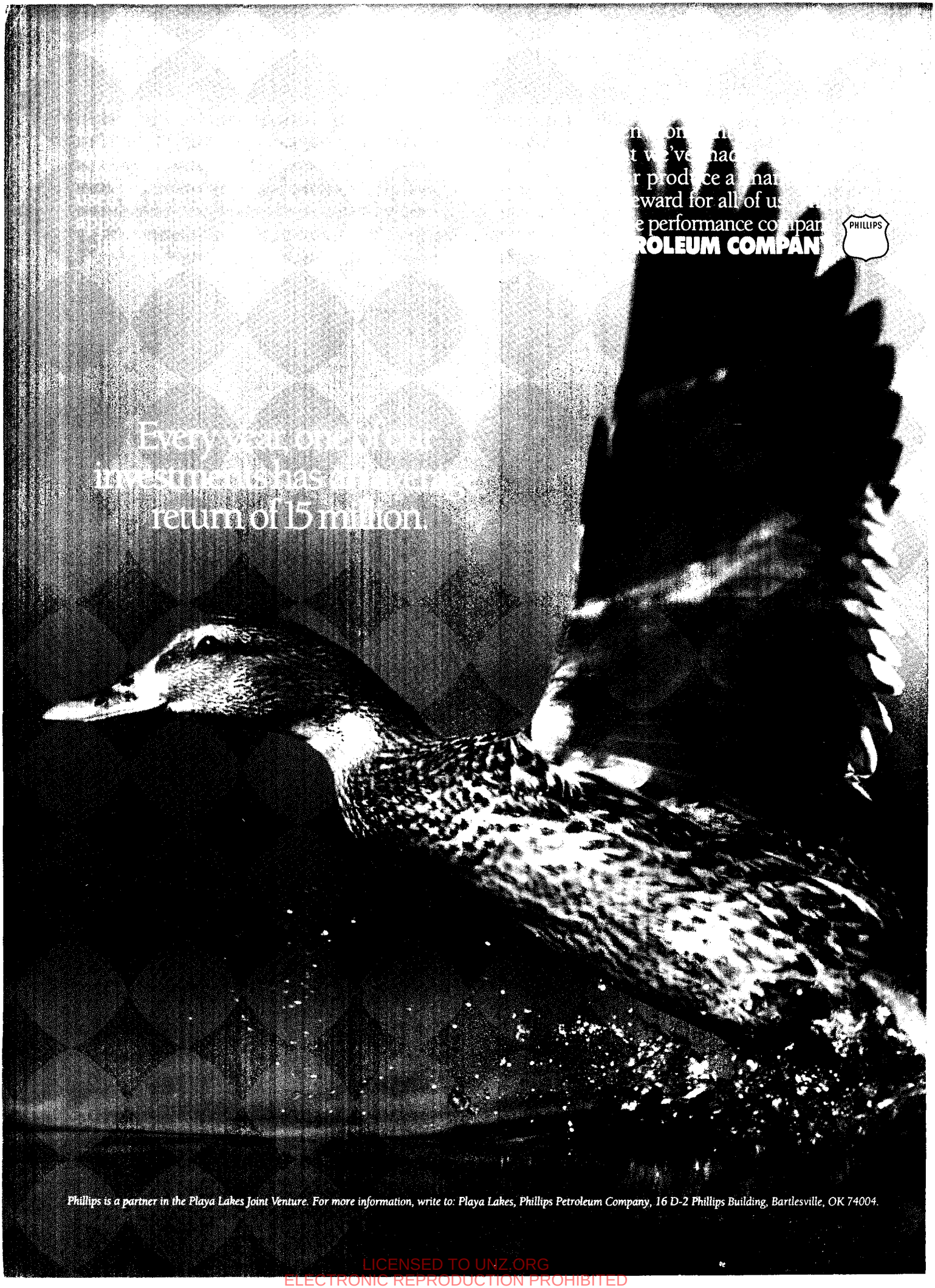

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